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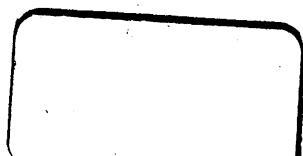
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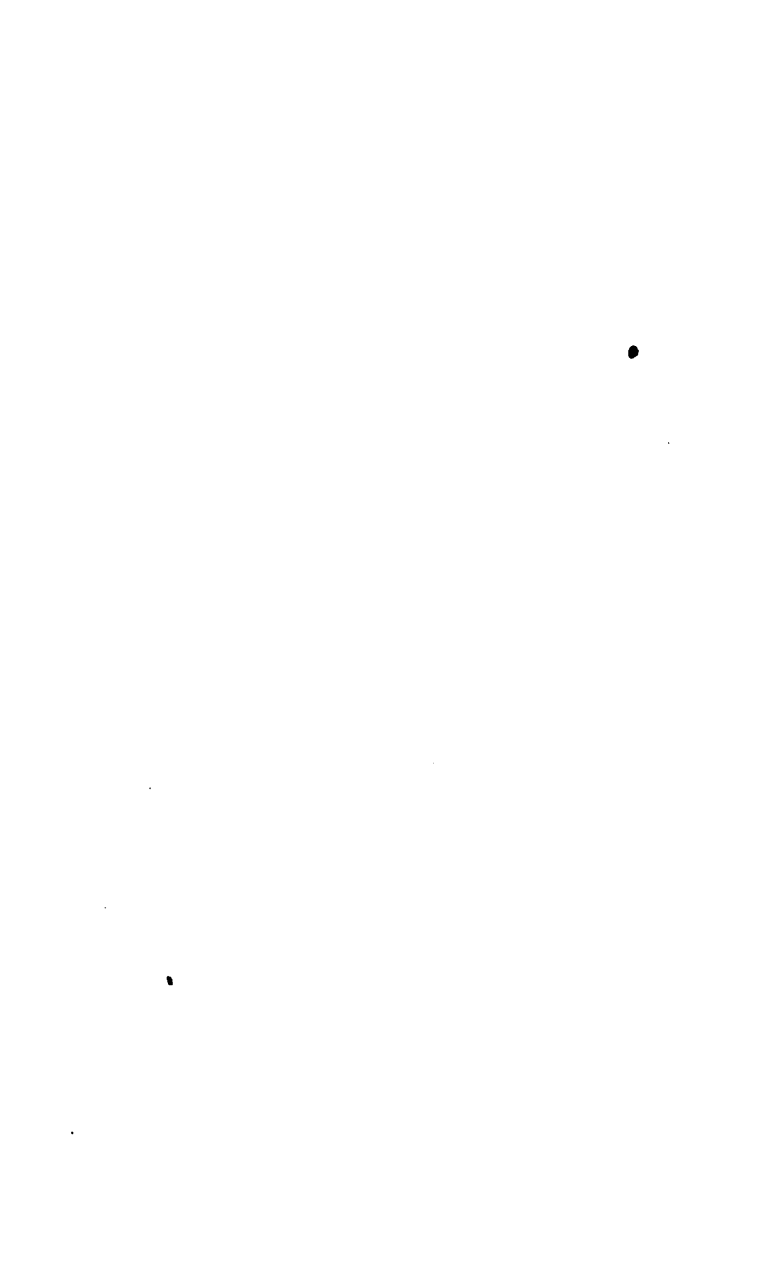
MEMOIRS
OF MADAME
DE STAAL-DE LAUNAY
VOLUME SECOND



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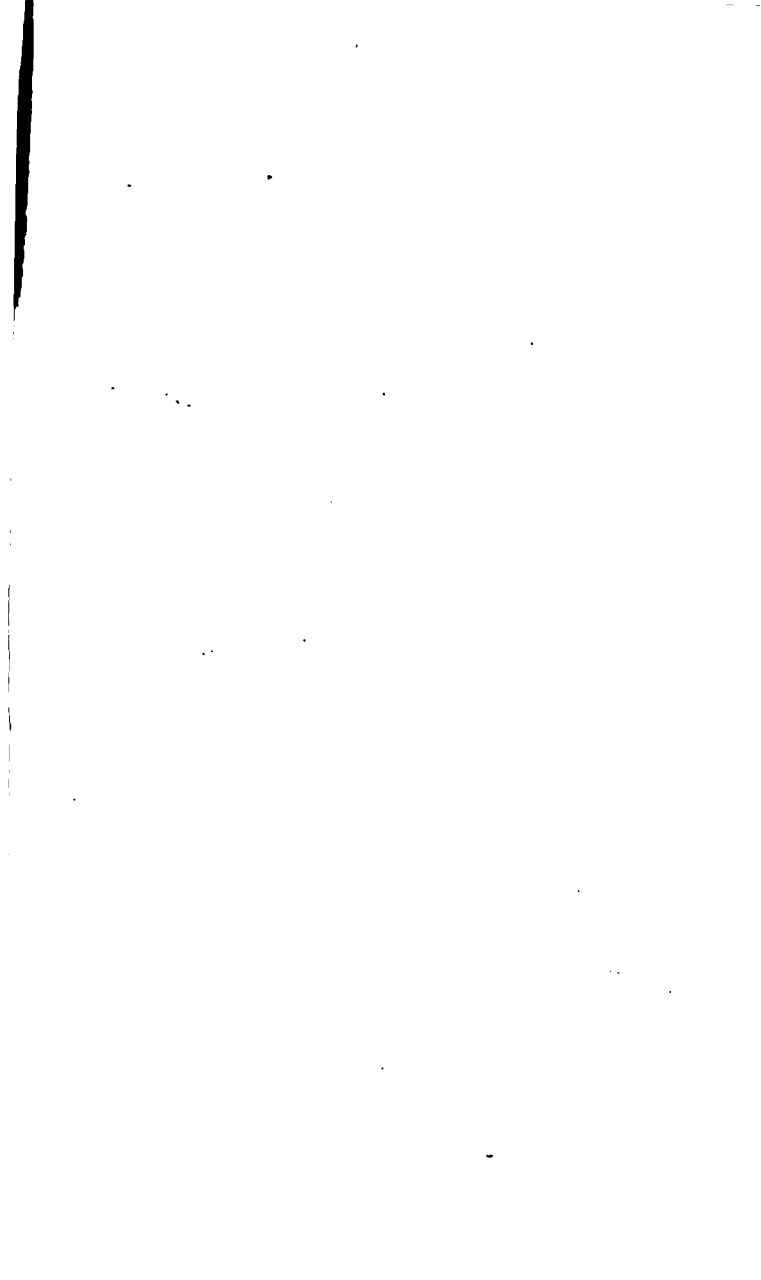
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MENIL VISITS M^{LE} DE LAUNAY

MEMOIRS

OF MADAME

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

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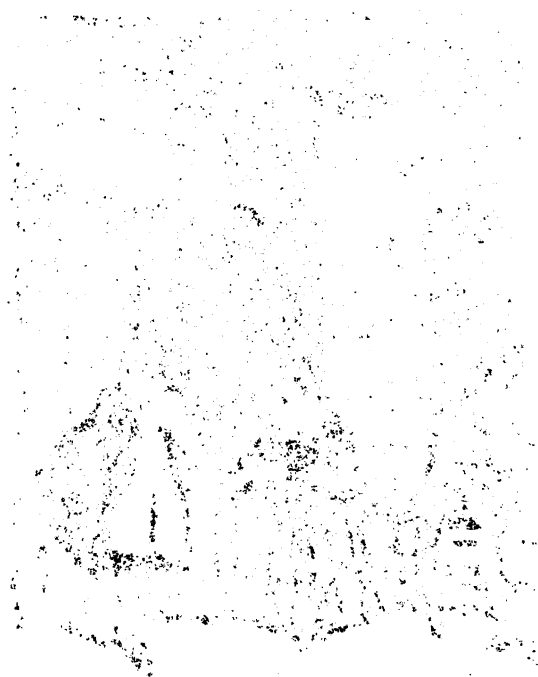
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MEMOIRS
OF MADAME
DE STAAL-DE LAUNAY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

7712 ✓ BY
CORA HAMILTON BELL

WITH FORTY ONE ETCHINGS

BY
AD. LALAUZE

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NEW-YORK
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MEMOIRS
OF
MADAME DE STAAL

FOUR or five days slipped by thus tranquilly enough, when having passed part of the night in composing this document, and in discoursing with me, she fell asleep toward six o'clock in the morning, and I retired. I was beginning to feel drowsy when I heard my door open wherein I had left the key. I thought that Madame la Duchesse du Maine had sent for me again. I said but half awake :

“ Who is there ? ”

A voice unknown to me replied :

“ In the name of the King. ”

I surmised at once what they wished with me. They bade me with small civility to rise immediately; I obeyed without answering. It was the 29th of December and not yet day. The persons who had entered my chamber were come without light; they went to seek one, and I beheld an officer of the guard and two mousquetaires. The officer read me the order which he had received to keep me in sight. Nevertheless I continued to rise. I demanded my waiting woman who lodged at a little distance; they would not let her come. The whole house was full of guards and mousquetaires, and one could not approach from any side. She made a futile attempt to pass, but was always repulsed.

I was in terrible uneasiness as to what was happening to Madame la Duchesse du Maine, whom I made no doubt they had arrested at the same time, but I knew well that they would not give me any news. I learned afterward that the Duc de Béthune, captain of the guard of the quarter, accompanied by M. de la Billarderie, lieutenant of the Life Guards, had brought her the King's order to conduct her to prison, to which she submitted without resistance and with

great calmness. La Billarderie demanded of the woman who was abed in the chamber of Madame la Duchesse du Maine if she were not Mademoiselle de Launay. She replied loudly that she was not, not being jealous at that moment of the treatment which was destined for me.

I remained alone with my three guards from seven o'clock in the morning until eleven, without knowing aught of what was passing. I asked one of them, with whom I had kept up a sufficiently lively discourse, if I should not follow Madame in case they transferred her elsewhere. He assured me that she would be refused nothing she demanded. This hope composed my mind, but I did not enjoy it long, for another guard came to tell mine that the Princess had departed and that they might leave me with but one mousquetaire; this they did.

The news of her departure without me weighed upon my heart. It was the first emotion I experienced. I was so prepared for all the rest that I had not felt any inquietude. I could not learn whither they had conducted Madame la Duchesse du Maine. I was told merely that she would sleep that night at Essonne, whence I inferred, falsely, that she was to be kept at Fontainebleau. I should have been much more deeply afflicted had I known that she was being taken into Burgundy, then

under the governorship of M. le Duc, to be placed in the citadel of Dijon; that she travelled in hired coaches and had for attendants two waiting women only. They sent her soon afterward at the solicitation of Madame la Princesse, Mademoiselle Desforges, a relative of M. de Malesieu, who had long been attached to her unofficially. All this must have seemed a strange degradation to this great princess who had always been surrounded by attendants and who thought herself alone if she were not in a throng.

The captain of the guard left her at Essonne; and M. de la Billarderie, with the detachment of Life Guards and Mousquetaires, carried her to Dijon, where he remained for some time near her. He was extremely touched by the misfortunes of this princess and sought only to lighten by his assiduity and services the horrors of her captivity.

M. le Duc du Maine was arrested at Sceaux, where he had remained during the sojourn of Madame la Duchesse du Maine in Paris. He was conducted to the citadel of Dourlens, in Picardy, where he was guarded by an officer named Favencour, who treated him with all the discourtesy and harshness of a veritable jailor. M. de Malesieu, who had remained at Sceaux with M. le Duc du Maine, was also taken captive

there; his papers were seized in his presence, and in his inkstand was found, folded in the contract of marriage of his son, the original of that letter from the King of Spain to the King of France for which he had made so strict a search, and of which he had so deplored the loss. As soon as he perceived it, he flung himself upon it and tore it up; but M. Trudaine, who was investigating his papers, rescued the fragments, which were carefully preserved, and he was carried to the Bastille.

MM. Davisard and Barjeton, who had helped prepare the memoirs on the rank of the legitimized princes, and had not entered at all into the present business, found themselves involved in the common disgrace of all who were especially attached to the house of Maine. The son of M. de Malesieu, a lieutenant-general of artillery, and the Chevalier de Gavaudun, were taken in Paris at the house of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, at the same time with her. Her maid of honour, Mademoiselle de Montauban, albeit she had no great measure of her confidence, suffered the same fate. Two valets to the princess, four of her lackeys, two women who polished the floors of her apartment, all these persons were taken with one sweep of the net, and conducted on the same day to the Bastille. They also did the Abbé le

Camus and that beggarly countess the honour to imprison them there, but I think a little later. Soon after, they sent thither, from the heart of the country, the old Marquis de Boisdavis, a gentleman of Poitou, because of a letter he had written to the Duc du Maine filled with offers of service and assurances of devotion to his interests, and which had been found among the papers of that prince.

The Cardinal de Polignac was exiled to Anchin, one of his abbeys in Flanders; the Prince de Dombes and the Comte d'Eu, his brother, were sent to the town of Eu in Normandy, an estate of M. le Duc du Maine. The princess, his daughter, was sent by Madame la Princesse to the convent of the Visitation, at Chaillot. The entire household was thus dispersed.

Shut up in my chamber, tête-à-tête with an ignorant mousquetaire, I could learn nothing of all these matters. I believe he would willingly have given me what information he knew, for he offered to render all the services I might exact of him. I would accept of none, as much from lack of confidence as from a desire not to give him, at so delicate a juncture, any claim on my gratitude. I had nevertheless a casket filled with papers, not liable to suspicion as bearing upon affairs of State, but concerning myself, which I would fain have

got rid of. I thought upon reflection, however, that it was better they should fall into the hands of the Ministers than into those of a mousquetaire. Fortunately this fellow was relieved by another just as he began to take too much interest in my troubles. He who took his place did not seem to me so compassionate. He merely exhorted me to make a light repast, giving me almost to understand that it might be my last. I knew not what abrupt execution he might announce to me, having no notion as to what they would do with me.

After dinner, MM. Fagon and Parisot¹, *maîtres des requêtes*, came to take my papers. I told them that they would find among them certain love letters; that it might be as well to inform them that they were from a man eighty years of age, though written in a schoolboy's hand for that he was blind; this was the Abbé de Chaulieu, and the secretary, his little page, who had no notion of spelling.

These gentlemen examined my books, wherein they found nothing to find fault with, ransacked every thing, even to my mattress, yet never saw that casket which I had desired to make away with. They wished to visit a coffer of which my waiting woman

1. A member of the Council of State next in rank to a counsellor.

had the key; this obliged them to send for her and they left her with me thence forward, which was a great consolation to me. An hour or two after, an officer of mousquetaires came to tell me to prepare myself to depart, without informing me where they were going to take me. I asked him if the maid who waited on me could not go with me. He told me that he had no orders on the subject and could not permit it without knowing the wishes of the Regent. I besought him earnestly to obtain this favour for me, the only one I should ask. He assured me that it would be accorded me and that the girl should follow me very shortly. He carried off his mousquetaire, shut me up in my chamber alone with her, and told me that in half an hour I should be sent for.

Poor Rondel, although she had been with me but a year, and had been officiously advised to desert me, assured me that, happen what might, she would not leave me. I had grounds to be as much content with her good sense as with her affection.

The casket full of my papers, which remained, made me uneasy, notwithstanding it contained but trifles; and I was so imprudent as to tell her to throw them into the fire when I was gone and she found herself alone in my chamber. I gave her the key; she had no time to make any objection

for at that moment they came for me and placed me in a coach with three mousquetaires.

It was seven o'clock in the evening. I doubted not then that the journey would be brief and that I was being carried to the Bastille. I arrived there indeed. I was forced to descend at the end of a little bridge where the governor came to receive me. After I had entered, I was kept for some time behind a door, because of the arrival of some of our faction whom they did not wish me to see. I understood nothing of all these manœuvres. These prisoners placed in their cells, the governor came to seek me and led me to mine. I passed more bridges where I heard the noise of chains, the music of which is displeasing; at length I arrived in a large room where there was nothing but the four walls, very dirty

and all blackened with charcoal by my idle predecessors. It was so stripped of furniture

that they sent

in search

of a little

straw chair

for me to

sit upon, ¹⁸

and two stones to prop up a faggot which they



lit; then they dexterously stuck a small end of candle against the wall to light me. All these commodities having been procured for me, the governor withdrew, and I heard five or six bolts and a double lock shut on me.

Behold me alone, face to face with my faggot, uncertain whether I should have the girl who would be society and a great support to me, more disturbed than ever as to the action she might take upon the unconsidered order I had given her, and of which I then saw all the consequences. I spent about an hour in this disquietude, and it was the most painful of all that elapsed during my imprisonment.

At length I saw the governor reappear leading to me Mademoiselle Rondel. She asked him with a very sprightly air if we were to go to bed on the floor. He replied in a bantering tone, equally out of place, and left us. As soon as I was alone with her I demanded what had become of my papers. She told me that she had opened the casket and that, finding it quite full, as I had not designated anything especially needful to be destroyed, she had judged that she had not leisure to burn everything and still less the means to prevent the ashes from witnessing against herself and me; that, moreover, she had considered that, after the visit made to my chamber, they would not return there, and that she

had there upon made up her mind to close the casket and bestow it in the obscure corner which had concealed it during the previous search. She returned me my key. I praised her prudence, which had repaired a piece of heedlessness on my part, whereof the results might have been disastrous.

We were conversing peaceably when we heard our doors opened with a crash, not that it could be done otherwise. They made us pass into a room opposite to ours without giving us any reason. They do not explain themselves in that place, and every one who approaches you has so close a visage that you scarce venture to put the smallest question to him.

We were barricaded as carefully in this room as we had been in the other. Scarcely were we shut up when I was struck by a noise which seemed to me quite extraordinary. I listened long to distinguish what it might be. Comprehending nothing and perceiving that it continued without interruption, I asked Rondel what she thought of it. She knew not what to reply, but, perceiving that I was disturbed, she told me that it came from the Arsenal from which we were not far, that it was perhaps some machine for the preparation of saltpetre. I assured her she was mistaken, that this noise was nearer than she thought and most extraordinary. For all that nothing could have been

more ordinary. I discovered later that this machine, which I apparently had imagined was destined to crush us to powder, was nothing but the turn-spit, which we heard the better that the room to which we had been transferred was above the kitchen.

Night drew on and we beheld neither bed nor supper. They came to remove us from this room which I disliked extremely, not having discovered my error concerning the noise which continued incessantly. We returned into the first. I found there a little bed sufficiently clean, an armchair, two chairs, a table, a bowl, a jug of water, and a sort of pallet for Rondel to sleep on. She found it musty and complained of it. She was told they were the King's beds and she must be content. Nothing could be said in reply. They left us, locking us up again.

These simple necessities, when we fear we may not have them, excite more joy in us than the most sumptuous magnificence can arouse in those who want for nothing. I was therefore greatly content to see a bed. I should not have been displeased to have seen supper also. It was eleven o'clock at night and nothing had appeared. I remembered then the exhortation of my mousquetaire who had urged me to dine, and I believed that he, being instructed in the manners and cus-

toms of the place, knew that they did not sup there. Hunger, which drives the wolf further from the forest, pressed on me also; but I saw no escape from it. At last supper arrived, but very late. The confusion of the day had caused the derangement, and I was no less surprised, on the day following, to see it arrive at six o'clock in the evening, than I was to await it so long on this occasion.

I supped, I went to bed; my fatigue would have made me sleep had not the little clock which the sentinel strikes at every quarter of the hour, to shew that he sleeps not, broken my slumbers each time. I thought it a cruel regulation to waken the poor prisoners every few minutes to reassure them that one was keeping watch, not for their safety, but for their security; 'twas the one thing I had most difficulty in accustoming myself to.

M. de Launay, the governor of our château, had just been installed in his office, when we arrived. His predecessor, M. de Bernaville, had died only the day before. The present governor, a relative of his, had been his pupil, whom he had perfectly instructed in all the practices of the jail. He came to see me the day following my incarceration. As I had observed that he had affected a tone of pleasantry, I used one toward him; he found me quite domesticated. I asked for some

books and playing cards. He sent me some odd volumes of *Cléopâtre*. I made the most of them for want of better, and I played at piquet with Rondel. She recounted to me all that she had seen or heard during the day on which we had been arrested, ere she had been shut up with me. When she had done, I made her begin again, and questioned her incessantly of matters she could not possibly know. I was chiefly curious to learn who were our companions in misfortune. She named to me all those whom she had seen arrested at the same time with me in our little Hôtel du Maine. There were many more for us to hear of.

“ We shall have an excellent opportunity ”, she said to me, “ of discovering them on Sunday in the chapel, and I promise you I shall take note of all. ”

We knew not then how little they troubled themselves to make the prisoners practice the duties of religion. It was a distinction that was accorded me to attend mass on festivals and Sundays. But I gained nothing from the privilege as far as the discoveries I had expected from it were concerned; I was hidden under a pavilion where I could see nothing and be seen by no one.

So many precautions were taken that one prisoner should not see another, that the governor said to me that he could not dispense with

putting paper over my windows which looked into the interior courtyard of the Château. I represented to him that this was ill worth the while for one so blind as I. He had observed that I was indeed short sighted and yielded without thinking that I might make use of the eyes of my companion. This was what I did. She passed the larger part of the day in looking out of the windows, where she stationed herself in such a manner that she could be seen by nobody, while at the same time nothing escaped her.

MM. d'Argenson and le Blanc, who had charge of our affair, came to interrogate the prisoners. We saw them pass through the courtyard and enter a hall beneath our room. The fire which was kindled there, whenever they were to come, sent its smoke into my apartment and gave me notice beforehand of their arrival. There are no observers so alert as prisoners. Their uninterrupted leisure, the lack of diversion, their lively interest, lead them to devote themselves wholly to this exercise. There is nothing they will not do in order to discover the veriest trifle.

Our judges were often accompanied by the Abbé Dubois; we then fancied we saw Minos, Æacos and Rhadamanthus. We took note of the person who was brought to be interrogated when the Abbé was not there. I lay down on the floor

to try to catch some words; this however was impossible. No articulate sound reached us. At the most, we could hear but a confused murmur, or a voice raised, and thus discern the heat or the tranquillity of the conference. Despite the unimportance of these discoveries, we brought ever the like ardour to the pursuit of them.

I waited with uneasiness the moment wherein the scene should become personal. I prepared answers to everything I imagined they could ask me. I compiled a sufficient number to fill a volume. None of them were of use to me, and I might have said upon my being interrogated :

I have an answer to every thing save to Who goes there?

My turn did not come soon; many others went before me. When M. le Marquis de Boisdavis was called, they asked him in what place and how he had formed so intimate a connection with the Duc du Maine.

"I have never seen him", quoth he, "any more than I have Her Royal Highness."

"How then", resumed the Minister, "were you so devoted to the interests of this prince, to the prejudice of the Regent?"

"As one takes a fancy without knowing wherefor", replied Boisdavis, "to one gamester rather than to another."

They got nothing more than this from him, though they had fetched at great expense all his family papers from the heart of his province.

My want of forethought on my departure, occupied as I was with other ideas than with what I might require, brought it to pass that at the end of a few days I stood in need of everything. I had only the mob cap which was on my head, and no more chemises than a heroine of romance when she is carried off, without having, like her, any casket of jewels. I had no resource save in the industry of poor Rondel, who washed all my linen in a hand basin. During this operation, I dressed my head in a white handkerchief I still had. 'Twas in this extreme *négligé* that I received the first



visit of the King's lieutenant of our château. There is no situation wherein a woman feels not vexation at appearing with disadvantage before some one who has never before seen her.

This Lieutenant of the King, M. de Maisonrouge by name, but newly appointed to his place and formerly a captain-major of cavalry, had never known anything outside his regiment. He was a good, honest soldier, with much natural kindliness, which a little roughness and rusticity accompanied without spoiling. He had not at first been willing to see either Mademoiselle de Montauban or myself, saying to the governor when he proposed to him to visit us :

“ What can I say to the silly wenches who will but fall a howling and weeping? ”

The governor assured him we were by no means in such despair. He resolved to see us. He came consequently to my room, and, in order to make his discourse consoling, said to me that I need not be uneasy concerning my situation; that, if Madame la Duchesse du Maine had done wrong, I would not be held responsible for it; that I would be pardoned because of the necessity I was under of obeying her. This remark seemed to me suspicious and I made not the least doubt that this man, whom I did not then know, was come to lay a trap for me. I replied that I did not base

my safety on what was personal to me ; but that, being persuaded they would find nothing against Madame la Duchesse du Maine, I had no apprehensions of her faults rebounding on me ; that, had she committed any wherein I had participated, I scarce deemed myself exculpated upon the account of commands that I ought never to have obeyed. Astonished to hear me reason thus tranquilly when he had thought to find me in an excess of despair, he took a fancy to me from the first moment and fell into the way of coming to see me very often.

At the moment of my direct need for everything, the governor came to my room with a purse full of gold and followed by a bale of all my clothes. I should not have known whence came this timely succour had I not recognized the purse which I had formerly made and given to M. de Valincourt. 'Twas he who, without fearing to acknowledge me at a time when my friends durst not own me, and who, though more constrained than any one to observe measures with respect to his master, went at once to the ministers to request permission, not alone to render me this service, but to send me every week an open sheet of paper containing several questions concerning the things I might want. This had a wide margin, where, pursuant to the leave he had obtained for

me, I replied by monosyllables to each article, in the presence of the governor, who brought it to me, and returned it to him. This timely succour never failed me from the moment it was granted till I was set at liberty again, and M. de Valincourt despised not entering into the smallest detail of what was necessary to me or simply agreeable, not even forgetting what concerned my maid. Nor did he neglect to remove and place in his own house my furniture, which would otherwise have been lost as our house had been only hired and was given up as soon as we were arrested there. His never failing consideration regarding things so insignificant bore the impress of true friendship, and his tender assiduity procured for me all that I could have expected to obtain for myself, had I possessed full liberty.

Thus relieved of the greatest distress of my situation, I might have relished the repose of it, had I not been tormented by a gloomy idea that haunted me continually. A few days before I was sent to the Bastille, the Abbé de Chaulieu had related to me, on the occasion of the imprisonment of the other persons, terrifying histories of what took place there; among others that of a woman of rank who had been put to the torture without having been tried, and so brutally that she had been maimed for the rest of her life. He averred that

this means was often made use of without any formalities and that the execution of it was left to the servants of the jail. This notion, which he had put into my mind, was sufficient to alarm me. I passed for being privy to the secrets of the affair. They imagined doubtless that I was as weak as women usually are, especially a person of so little importance. There was every probability that, if they resorted to that means, their choice would fall upon me. Struck by this idea, I was extremely desirous of ascertaining if there were foundation for it, but I knew not how to set about it. One day when I was with the Lieutenant of the King I ventured to turn the conversation to the various things that I had heard took place in the Bastille. He treated most of them as puerile stories. At length lowering my voice as one usually does when embarrassed, I said to him that it was asserted that people were sometimes put to the torture without the formality of a trial. He made no answer to me. We had been walking up and down my room during this interview. He took another turn and then departed abruptly.

I was seized with consternation and more persuaded than ever of the sinister treatment in store for me. I imagined that this man was aware of it, and that this knowledge had closed his mouth, as he had been loath to prevaricate in his official po-

sition, or to hasten by anticipation the ills that I must endure. I continued to walk backward and forward hurriedly, reflecting profoundly on the subject. My only wish was to bear well, and I gave myself no concern for the fact that I might suffer or that I might die; but I was fearful of what an agony of pain might effect, despite the strongest resolutions; and I durst not rely upon myself in a case where I had had no experience of my own as war-rant. I called that of others to my aid. Why should I not do what others have done! I said to myself. We undergo frightful operations to save our lives. What can pain compass? It can draw cries from us, but cannot force us to utter words. After this examination I composed myself, and trusted that upheld by powerful motives I should support all that was not beyond the force of nature to endure. I perceived afterward that our Lieutenant was deaf in one ear, and, recalling that I had addressed my question to his bad side, I laughed at the vain fright his apparent circumspection had given me.

I was not yet freed from it when I was called to be interrogated by the commissioners. I took the precaution of applying a little rouge which I had in my pocket, although I never used it, to conceal as far as possible any change of countenance that might betray me. I had been in prison above three weeks when these gentlemen conversed with me.

The Keeper of the Seals in his austere manner told me to be seated and take off my glove. I took off the one from my left hand, not knowing what was afoot. He told me to take off the one from my right hand and to raise it. I did all that he desired, firmly resolved however to tell him only what pleased me.

He demanded in what places and manner I had passed my life. I said I had been in a convent from my birth till I entered the service of Madame la Duchesse du Maine. My history was brief. He then said to me that this princess had great confidence in me. I responded that my sex and the position I occupied with her did not admit of this great confidence. He replied that I spent part of the nights with Madame la Duchesse du Maine and asked in what manner that time was passed. I said I read to her to put her to sleep. M. le Blanc suggested it was probable that the reading was often interrupted; I assented to this.

“ And by what discourse? ” continued he.

“ ’Twas usually upon the subject of our reading ”, I replied.

“ Madame la Duchesse du Maine ” returned M. le Blanc, “ has too lively an understanding to discourse for a great while of one matter without mixing with it others. ”

“ So she did ”, returned I, “ and the topics of

her conversations were so varied that it would be impossible for me to recall them. ”

Some one added :

“ You were secretary to Madame la Duchesse Du Maine? ”

I said I had never borne the title nor exercised the function of that office; that in reality I took care of her books and joined in the little discussions relating to that employment. They alleged that I had written often to the Librarian of the King's Library. I answered that Madame la Duchesse du Maine, having had need of many books while writing the pamphlets on the subject of their rank, had obtained them from the library, and that I had been charged with the task. They then told me they had many letters which I had written to an Abbé. I hesitated some minutes ere replying, not being able to remember what the letters were; at length refreshing my memory, I said that they must have been to a certain Abbé le Camus who had offered his services to Madame la Duchesse du Maine to write in the controversy on their rank; that the incapacity of this person had constrained her to make use of him only in the researches relating to the matter in hand; that she had told him to communicate the result of these to me, and that this order had furnished, during a time, fresh occasion each day for the Abbé le Camus to write to me in

order to send me his notes; that Madame la Duchesse du Maine, touched by his assiduous endeavours, how futile soever they were, had commanded me to convey to him, from time to time, her thanks.

“ Those very letters ”, I added, “ are proof that there was no question of anything else. ”

They objected that there was mention made therein of the *Constitution*. I answered that I had no remembrance of it, that I never concerned myself with matters I had no understanding of, and which were so far beyond my ability. They then said to me that they had found a torn paper in Madame la Duchesse du Maine’s room and that I must have destroyed it. This was not so; I affirmed it. They asked me whether she knew that she was to be arrested. I replied that there had been rumours of it which had reached even her ears, but that she had not seemed to pay great attention to them.

I ever fancied that they were going to ask me more embarrassing questions and that they discoursed of these trifles but to throw me off my track. I was deceived in this. They said nothing to me then of more importance.

M. le Blanc withdrew to order another prisoner summoned whom they wished to see. M. d’Argenson, when alone with me, inquired very graciously if I had been well treated and gave me

to understand that such was his intention, whence I inferred that I had been recommended to him from high quarters. In truth the Marquise de Lambert had expressed to a person, a lady friend of hers, who had great influence over him, the interest she took in me.

I was quite content with the manner in which I had acquitted myself on this first occasion; I had not seemed embarrassed or frightened, I had told only what I wished to tell and had scarce departed from the truth, to which it seems to me that the mind if forced to any equivocation, returns as naturally as a pendulum to the perpendicular. I believed that I might count upon myself to sustain my part well to the end. As my deportment was the only thing for which I was responsible, and as I knew moreover that princes always extricate themselves from their difficulties, I ceased to distress myself. I was however extremely afflicted when I learned that Madame la Duchesse du Maine was shut up in the citadel of Dijon; but, save for certain disturbing circumstances which I learned from time to time, my life was comfortable and tranquil. I even found greater liberty than I had lost. In prison, 'tis true, one has no will of one's own, but one submits not to that of others, which at least is half a gain. The absence of objects of any sort dispels all wishes, or the

impossibility of gratifying them strangles them at their birth. This is not the case in servitude; there everything is offered and refused to our desires at the same time. Then again one is exempt from the constraints, the duties, the considerations of society; and, taking it all together, it is perhaps the place where one is most free. It seemed to me at least that this paradox might be supported by sufficiently plausible reasons.

I never felt that *ennui* which is the chief dread of prisoners. This sensation, if it be a sensation and not rather the total absence of it, being incompatible with the distress and inquietudes that took possession of me during the first days, could not seize me at once. I armed myself against it when I became more composed by the occupations I made for myself and by all the amusements that presented themselves, and which I took care to cherish.

'Tis not the importance of things which makes them precious to us; 'tis the need we have of them. I was astonished at the prof-



it I derived from a cat which I had asked for simply with the idea of delivering myself from the mice that persecuted me. This cat was big, she gave birth to kittens, and these in turn to others. I had time to see several generations of them. This pretty family gamboled and danced before me, and diverted me mightily, although I had never been fond of animals of any sort.

I also acquired a taste for cards and sewing, which was quite new to me. All these things in their proper place refreshed me after the serious reading I made my chief occupation. This experience taught me that what renders the keenest pleasures insipid to those whose lives are filled with them alone is that they pervert them from their true function, which is to rest the body after the fatigues of work. It also reminded me that each stage has its joys, even age and infirmity. There is no time of life that gives birth to so many needs; their alleviation is a greater pleasure than the enjoyment of benefits which have not been preceded by some sort of necessity. This reflection is adapted to diminish the dread of the grievous situations into which we may fall. We contemplate them as we do a residence in the torrid zone, which seems intolerable by reason of the heat, and we forget the winds and rains which temper it.

I had been in this peaceful abode for more than three months when, at the end of Lent, the governor asked me if I wished to prepare for Easter. I enquired if I should be permitted to have the confessor of my choice. I was told : no ; that I must needs content myself with the chaplain of the house, or not confess at all. All the officers were so suspected by me that I was tempted to postpone this duty to a more opportune occasion. However, after reflecting on the necessity of performing this duty, as well as on the awkwardness of dispensing with it ; being fearful, too, that the Regent, who informed himself of the smallest details of our conduct, would draw false conclusions therefrom, I determined at all hazard to make this confession. As I had sundry matters to recall to memory which I might confuse, I asked the governor for paper that I might set them down in order not to forget them. He told me that he permitted nothing to be written in the prison unless he read it himself ; that he would give me on this condition what I required of him. This poor pleasantry served but to convince me of his extreme suspicion which I had previously experienced when I had implored him, even going so far as to throw myself on my knees before him, to write a note himself to Madame de Grieu which I would dictate, to relieve her from the horrible

uneasiness she suffered on my account, he had been inflexible to all my entreaties, dreading a hidden meaning beneath simple matters which he would have written with his own hand.

I had then to confide in my memory for the accuracy of my confession. Never was suspicion more unjust than that which I felt for our chaplain. I found him the best man in the world, simple and humane, more disposed to lament my misfortunes than to reprove my faults. I was vastly content to have so happily encountered and conquered the foolish terror which would have set aside principle and an indispensable observance.

The sincerity inseparable from my acts, and the desire I have always had to do nothing but the best I was capable of, recalled me at this juncture to pious exercises. All the confusion of political intrigues, the passions which are mingled in them, and the dissipations of the world, had infinitely distracted me. This new resource assured the tranquillity I already enjoyed, and I regarded without emotion many matters which would have disturbed me.

The Comte de Laval, to the great astonishment of all the world who regarded him as one of the chiefs of the enterprise, remained at liberty. I made no doubt but that he had been arrested at the same time with us, and I often asked Rondel,

who knew him not, if she did not see a tall lean man with a black chin-piece, which he wore as a result of the war, his jaw having been fractured. At last she saw him arrive at the time of which I speak, and cried :

“ Ah ! here is the man with the chin-piece ! ”

I had dealt more with him than with any other, and, although I might trust to the word we had given each other, I should have been better pleased to know he was far away than so near.

The capture of the Comte de Laval served as the means of embarrassing the Marquis de Pompadour, whom they desired absolutely to force to speak, and who, till then, had preserved an obstinate silence. They adduced certain facts as having been confessed by the count which the Marquis had told only to him ; these without doubt were simply surmises or else had been revealed by some indiscreet person to whom M. de Laval might have confided them before his arrest ; for afterward they could get nothing from him. M. de Pompadour, however, who was not shod for slippery ways, stumbled in his responses when threatened with being confronted by the count. The Ministers, seeing him waver, brought into position a fresh battery to destroy him. Maisonrouge, Lieutenant of the King, was exceedingly attached to him. M. le Blanc took him aside one day and said to

him in great confidence that he felt an interest in M. de Pompadour and was in despair at the unfortunate turn his affair was taking; that he was to be tried and would be beheaded unless he prevented the calamity by a sincere avowal of all that had passed, the full confession of which they desired to have written in his own hand; that M. le Duc d'Orleans had need of the like instrument to justify his measures, and that this was the only means of hindering him from giving over to the rigour of the law all the persons implicated in the affair. M. le Blanc gave the Lieutenant of the King to understand that he only confided to him so profound a secret to the end that he might try to engage the Marquis de Pompadour to adopt the only course that could save him. Having thus touched Maisonrouge's kind heart, and not fearing that its emotions would be overset by the sagacity of his understanding, he promised himself success in a negotiation wherein he had so skilfully deceived his ambassador.

The poor Lieutenant, still terrified by what he had just heard, ran to M. de Pompadour, to whom he repeated the whole of this confidence, which one had been careful not to recommend him to keep secret. The Marquis was seized with consternation and resolved upon all that was desired of him. He made a general confession, disguising

nothing and omitting nothing. He did more : when one begins to slide, there is no stopping till at the foot of the slope. He had written that, while treating of the present affair with Madame la Duchesse du Maine, she had interrupted the conversation on the appearance of M. le Duc du Maine. The Keeper of the Seals, offended at all that tended to the justification of that prince, told M. de Pompadour that 'twas not an apology for the Duc du Maine they required of him, and that he must erase that clause. He erased it, and forbore to give M. d'Argenson to understand that he was abusing his office in not receiving impartially evidence both for and against the prisoner.

M. le duc d'Orleans, after having treated people of distinction with so much severity, and made such a commotion in the world for such slight reasons, sought but to gloss over his conduct in the eyes of the public. He was delighted to have in hand the documents he had wrung from the Marquis de Pompadour, and flattered himself that fear or weariness would procure him the like productions from each of us. He would, he said, have given a million for those the Chevalier de Menil had thrown into the fire.

M. de Pompadour was granted, as reward for his frankness, not the liberty which one had given him reason to expect, but the diversion of

walking upon the bastion, whither he was conducted every day. A short time after I received the same favour, without having merited it in the least. This indulgence was also extended to several of our friends, who were taken one after another under a strong guard to walk upon the towers of the château. As a distinction I had the last hour for my walk and our Lieutenant, who became more and more fond of me, reserved the task of conducting me thither for himself. He announced to me on the last day of April, when he came for me, that M. le Blanc had given orders that our promenades should cease on the 1st of May.

The strangeness of the day pitched upon to shut us up, after having made us endure all the inclemency of the weather, surprised me and convinced me that they had meant to torment us under the guise of diversion. The Lieutenant of the King explained to me that our astute politicians feared that, at a time when all the world was abroad, the passers by, and especially these who had an interest in any of us, might come and ogle us; that we might make signs to them and they to us, and that this might entail dangerous consequences.

"Alas! Monsieur", I said to him, "it would be vain to ogle me, either close at hand or from afar; I should see nothing of it. Whenever that

event has befallen me, it has always been necessary to apprise me of it. And here, who would inform me? ”

Holding this converse, we took our way toward the garden of the bastion where, on entering, I said with Phedre:

Sun, I am come to behold thee for the last time.

Shortly after this, an incident happened which might have caused me more chagrin than I experienced from it. One fine morning (we had been then four months in prison) I saw three of those who had been taken at the same time with myself leave our Château. These were Mademoiselle de Montauban, M. de Malesieu the younger, and M. Barjeton. The governor, who surmised that I had perceived them, thought it unnecessary to make a mystery of it to me, and, persuaded that I should be in despair at seeing the deliverance of others and not my own, sought reasons to make me take this event in good part. After having exhorted me not to be afflicted, he told me that it was a token that I should be set at liberty. I replied to the first part of his discourse that I was far from finding an increase of grief in the cessation of the ills of my companions in misfortune, that it was rather a solace to have nothing more to fear for

them. As to his prognostications I gave him to understand that I was not in the least imposed upon, and that after the sorting which had been made it was clear that those of us who were left were like to remain for a long time.

I know not whether it was to console us for this that our promenade was restored to us. I received a particular favour by which I was more touched. Our Lieutenant asked permission of M. le Blanc to give me ink and paper that I might scribble my ideas. He consented on condition that the leaves were numbered and that I should account for them. This restrained me in the kind of subjects that I could treat. I chose a very serious one that they might find nothing to criticise. This was moral reflections on certain passages of Ecclesiastes. The distractions which unexpectedly fell to my lot prevented my continuing this work.

M. de Maisonrouge, relieved of part of his cares by the departure of some of us, redoubled his attentions to me. He took, though scarce sensible of it, the greatest liking to me that ever person had. He is the only man by whom I believe myself to have been really loved, although it has happened to me, as to every woman, to find many who have shewn a fondness for me. This one spoke never a word to me of his sentiments, and I believe I perceived them long ere he did. He was

concerned with me to such a degree that he talked of nothing else. I was the sole subject of his discourse with all the prisoners to whom he paid visits; and he honestly believed that it was they who made him talk of me. He came back to see me quite enraptured with the supposed esteem I had inspired in them.

"It is amazing", said he to me, "to what extent you are admired and how much all the world here is interested in you. They speak of you to me incessantly, and I can go nowhere but I hear your praises."

This became true in the end after they had remarked the excessive pleasure which he took in it. Dependence gives birth to flattery; captives employ it toward their jailors as subjects toward their sovereigns. Maisonrouge's weakness discovered, the people under his orders thought to win him by means of it. Some sent me fresh provisions; others, amusing books; each, according to what he had, offered me some sort of homage, which came always through him.

The Chevalier de Menil made use of a dream, real or feigned, to pay his court to this master. He told him one day (this preceded some of the things, which, not to break the thread, I have recounted in proper sequence) he told him, then, that he had dreamed the night previous that he

had been brought to trial (it was indubitably a prisoner's dream) and that he had been condemned to perpetual confinement in the Bastille but in company with me, who likewise could never leave it; and that this circumstance had consoled him for the rigorous sentence. This appeared to Maisonrouge vastly flattering to me on the part of one who had never seen me, and the idea of keeping me always in his custody did not displease him. He came at once to regale me with the recital. I know not wherefore I gave it more attention than the like matters he was accustomed to recount to me.

Some days afterward he went to see M. de Menil, who had taken physic, and in the course of conversation, having spoken of poetry, he said to him :

“ You should make some to divert your neighbour. ”

His lodging was over against mine.

“ And how? ” replied he, “ I have neither paper nor pen. ”

“ Do not let that hinder you ”, cried the Lieutenant; “ here are pencil and paper; write. ”

He wrote some verses hastily on a scrap which Maisonrouge brought to me, charmed to procure me a new diversion, and to make it the more complete he said to me :

“Respond in the same style; I will give you what you need.”

This venturesome beginning pleased me extremely; I was vastly obliged to the Lieutenant of the King for his complaisance. I answered then in quasi-Marotic verse such as were those I had received. To my response came another the next day, to which again I must needs reply. *Maison-rouge*, seeing nothing in this trifling which could injure the king or the state, and being sensible that I took a great pleasure therein, exhorted us to continue, and we were only too happy to do so. Our poetry, informal though it was, wearying me a little, I insinuated that prose, as being easier, would be more agreeable. The Lieutenant consented with the same goodness of heart and every day brought me an open letter and carried back my response. From time to time we mingled verse with the prose; the whole contained nothing but the purest trifling.

One must be or have been in prison to know the value of such a diversion. Our verses were the worst ever made; I shall put them notwithstanding at the end of this with part of the letters, to preserve all the history of this whimsical adventure.

This commerce of invisibles became more and more gallant; I lent myself to it without heed

and without disquietude. The Chevalier de Menil was very curious to catch a glimpse of me; he stated this from time to time in his letters; I maintained that, if ever we saw one another, it would be the end of our adventure; that in losing this advantage it would become vulgar, less piquant, and our commerce more constrained. Despite this discreet advice, he redoubled his entreaties to the Lieutenant to obtain an interview. In fine he exhibited us the one to the other, placing us each on the threshold of his own door. We remained rather discountenanced, perhaps because we needed mutually to lower our ideals. We said nothing to each other, such was the understanding, and a moment after we disappeared. The letters which followed this apparition bore sign of the mistake we had made. I perceived it; it furnished several new pleasantries; we had exhausted all that could be drawn from our previous situation.

Prisoners are not easily disheartened. The Chevalier, thinking to find more interest in a conversation than in this simple meeting, told the Lieutenant of the King that the favour he had done us was too slight; that it was not enough to see each other; that to make acquaintance we must talk together, and in fine extorted from him this last compliance. The Lieutenant brought him

one evening to my room. I was abed, and, in order not to put any constraint upon the conversation, he left him at the head of my bed and amused himself at a few paces distance in conversing with Mademoiselle Rondel. Fresh embarrassment sprang up between us. The Chevalier, like Tonquin d'Armorique, who, when he had found his love, knew not precisely what to say to her, was at a loss to know of what to speak to me. We had nevertheless some common subjects. We had no reason to be more content with each other in making headway than we had at the first step. Maisonrouge, becoming aware that our conversation languished, came to revive it; we sustained it a little better with him. The whole episode was so brief that truly we had hardly more than time to recognize each other.

At this point we remained; for a time we wrote to each other continually, but this pastime began to lose the charm of novelty, and what little we had seen of each other deprived it of the ease and familiarity which had been its chief attraction, without giving us anything in its place. I employed, to put an end to it, a pretext which presented itself. I sent word to the Chevalier de Menil that I was about to go into retirement to prepare myself for the festival (it was Whit Sunday which my revived piety gave me a

desire to keep worthily), and I found that writing was a great distraction to a recluse. The turmoil of the world perchance causes less to those who are in the midst of it.

The Chevalier de Menil took the reasons for my retirement in good faith, and sought not to thwart my design, either because he respected my motives or was himself weary of writing; for myself, who had thought I was tired, I felt keenly the privation. The blank which was left in place of an amusement rendered so lively by our situation shewed me that I clung to it much more than I had imagined. I felt extremely piqued at the lack of resistance which had been made to my proposal, and this sentiment, so out of proportion to the cause, made me fear one more serious. This apprehension joined to my vexation helped me to persist in my determination. The faithful Maison-rouge remained to me more assiduous, more attached and less successful than ever.

It is the fate of a passion too faithful and too pure always to find ingratitude. He made me a kind of declaration tolerably ingenious and wholly unpremeditated. Madame de Réal, my most intimate friend ('twas Mademoiselle de Grieu, who had been married shortly before my imprisonment), came to see him often to hear news of me. He told me one day that on going out with her she

had asked him if he took any care of me, and that he had replied :

“ Eh ! wherefore should I not take care of her, Madame ? All the world says I am in love with her. ”

“ God grant it be so, Monsieur ! ” she exclaimed.

The naïveté of this wish made me laugh ; I paid no attention to the real meaning of the conversation and he never explained himself more clearly ; but all his conduct bore testimony to his affection. An attention without abatement, a complacency without limit, a perpetual care to gratify me, with never a thought of himself ; a desire rather to satisfy than to please me, so much mine that he seemed no longer to belong to himself ; I saw never in the world, not even in a romance, sentiments so perfect as were his ; sentiments never belied, and so much the more admirable that they were not the outcome of refinement of intellect, but of his simple nature, which seemed to desire to offer his heart where there was nothing to be gained. Uprightness, honour, all the virtues which make the worthy man, were equally natural to him ; and his understanding, neither acute nor embellished, was truly direct and judicious.

The festival which had given occasion for my

pretended retirement being over, I came out of it. Our Lieutenant, to compensate me for it, brought the Chevalier de Menil to my room the very next morning, and we took tea together with a certain air of freedom. He put him back again into his own apartment a few moments after. But



the Chevalier, on leaving my room, adroitly let fall a note. The well trained Rondel perceived it, picked it up, and delighted brought it to me. She

²¹ was charmed at every thing which could divert me. I found there- in these enigmatical words :

The wise lawgiver who realizes that he has laid down too severe a law should admit its modification. The submissive subject awaits this admission before permitting himself the smallest transgression. How is one to know whether this law remains in force for ever or but for a time. In this latter case the tranquillity of the people suffers no interruption.

This continuation of our adventure under a new form pleased me, and drew me on to a step more grave than any which had preceded it. I replied to this note; I remember no longer in what terms, but to this effect: "Speak, you are heard." And this reply was transmitted furtively. Menil, encouraged by the assent I appeared to yield to his designs, pushed them yet further. He ventured to introduce himself into my room without a conductor.

The apartment of the Lieutenant was above my room, which he entered at any hour; and for the greater convenience he left the key in my door. Menil having, by dint of strength and skill, opened his own, it was not difficult for him to enter mine. He chose the hour when the Lieutenant of the King went to sup with the governor. The governor resided in a suite of rooms separated from ours by two courts.

At this unlooked for apparition, I was struck with the greatest astonishment. Fear, disquietude, mingled with the joy that one who began to please me should risk so much to see me, created great confusion in my feelings. The more agreeable got the upperhand, thrust out the others, and I listened to what he wished to impart to me. This was the declaration of a serious attachment, veiled hitherto beneath the trifling which had reach-

ed me. To give a certain foundation to these grand sentiments which I was disposed to doubt, he alleged an older esteem which my reputation had aroused in him. Everything which tends to persuade us of our own superior merit seems at least trust-worthy. I did not examine too rigorously into this statement. Disposed to believe that the Chevalier de Menil judged me worthy to be loved and loved me, I yielded on this persuasion. Absorbed in what he was saying to me, I took little heed of my replies, thinking less of hiding from or shewing him my own sentiments than of convincing myself of his.

The place of our abode greatly abridged the formalities. Any where else I should have been long without wishing to listen, longer still in replying; but in a place where, having attained to a sight of one another, we knew not if we should ever see each other again, we said more in one hour than might possibly have been said in the course of years; and not merely did we speak, but thought, quite otherwise than we should have done elsewhere.

Yet this conversation, though so full of matter, was not long. We were warned of the entrance of our masters into the court of the Château by the grounding of the sentry's pike as he saluted. This was the signal for our separation. The Lieutenant

of the King came, as was his custom, to wish me a good night on returning to his apartment, and to close my doors well and duly, the keys of which, with all the others, remained at night in his chamber. As he had no suspicions, he did not remark my absorbed air, or attributed it to general causes.

When I found myself alone, I gave myself up to endless reflections on what had just happened. I kept repeating the conversation, weighed each word, interpreted tones and gestures, explained the hidden meanings; and drew from the whole consequences without end. Arrived at the point where objects become distorted and confused by reason of their multiplicity and distance, I returned on my traces, and found in the singularity of our acquaintance, in its strange sequel, all the signs of an entanglement which might go a long way. I wished not to enter into that of which I might repent me; and, in spite of the inclination which already, aided by the situation we were in, carried me forward, I took the resolution to break off this commerce, which had become dangerous.

I wrote a letter in this mind to the Chevalier de Menil, wherein I pointed out to him that I had willingly lent myself to all that had seemed to me mere trifling; but that since he had explained himself in another tone to me, I could have no

farther relation with him without belieing the deportment of my entire life and the principles on which I had founded it; that I wished not to add to the ills in which fortune had involved me those into which imprudence might precipitate me, being but too sensible that the blame would attach to myself alone.

There was possibly not a word of what I have set down here in my letter, but this was as near as may be the sense of it. It gave him an absolute dismissal, yet not in a manner to make him accept of it; nor indeed did he. I had a reply quite filled with his resolution to overcome mine. Menil did not content himself with writing; he came again as he had the evening previous. I wished to send him back; he was resolute in remaining, employed all the protestations of an attachment without bound and without end, such as I could never condemn nor repent of responding to. I persisted in my firm determination never to embark in so dangerous an intercourse. I told him that the more he would persuade me of the truth of his sentiments, the more he taught me to fear them and constrained me to refrain from listening to them. All that could be said without change of manner was said on one side and the other, howbeit but briefly. I finished by beseeching M. de Menil most earnestly not to attempt to see me

and to renounce all direct correspondence with me, wishing by no means to run the risks added by our situation to those consequent to this kind of entanglement.

He quitted me with all the marks of an excessive grief, submissive none the less to my will. I was mightily content with so good a defence on my part, which, however, cost me dear. I lost the diversion of my solitude and all the resources which these absorbing sentiments presented to me. 'Twas no longer possible to return to our frivolous intercourse, deprived of all its charm and otherwise outworn. But Menil was not so easy to manage as I had supposed.

He wrote to me that he could not sustain the part which I had forced him to take; that he had made a thousand reflections and found means to assure his repose without disturbing mine; that the only favour he demanded of me was that he might see me again and communicate a plan to me; that he flattered himself I should be content, and that in fine, after his conversation, he would submit without reserve to my decision, be that what it might.

I foresaw what Menil would say to me; I believed that I needs must hear him. Moreover I had a great desire to see him again. I consented therefore to another interview. He came; I received

him with a sad and somewhat embarrassed air.

“ Well, Monsieur”, said I “ what do you wish to say to me now? ”

He remained for some time without replying, as if to bring into order his confused thoughts. At length finding words :

“ You may have believed ”, said he, “ that, as I have done nothing but retail twaddle to you, I had no thought but to charm away the weariness of my solitude. It is, for all that, true that from the first I have thought of forming a connection with you which might become more intimate. You must have remarked in the multitude of my questions an extreme desire to discover your character, your taste, your sentiments, and to attain more and more to a knowledge of yourself through all that veiled you from my regard. Our friend ”, added he, “ has narrated to you a dream which I confided to him. I dreamed it while wide awake. It was the result of my ceaseless cogitations on the happy lot of one who should pass his life, in no matter what spot, with such a person as yourself. If, knowing you only by the report of another person, I could think thus of you, judge what a more direct knowledge of all that you are must have added to the idea I had pictured of the happiness of an inseparable future. It is indeed this perfect felicity which I aspire to, should my

vows prove acceptable to you. You are unseasonably alarmed at the offer which I have made to you of them. I should not have ventured to make it if my intentions had been less worthy of you. I did not think it seemly, however", he continued, "to let them appear in my first conversations. It seemed to me more proper to know something of the sentiments I could inspire in you before shewing you the full depth of mine; and I should not yet have explained them, could I have supported the deprivation of all commerce with you, to which fate I saw myself absolutely condemned."

I listened with astonishment and without interruption to the Chevalier de Menil's long discourse. I told him, when he had ceased speaking, that I could not but be sensibly touched by his affection for me, nor recompense it better than by not binding him to it; that I owed it to him to apprise him, if he were ignorant of it, in how much my condition was in every way unequal to his own; that I had neither name nor wealth, and that for all advantage I possessed only a humiliating and indelible title; that, if he were aware of my mean estate, I ought to direct all his attention to it, and to make him consider the blame he would incur, of which I desired to be neither the cause nor the occasion. He told me that he was perfectly well

acquainted with the condition of my fortune and had no uneasiness on that account but his inability to offer me a better than his own; that the opinion of the world disturbed him no more; that he was sure of the approbation of men of sense, and did not believe that one should sacrifice one's happiness to the perverse judgment of an insensate mob; that he did not lay his views before me without having well examined them, and without being entirely fixed in the resolution he had taken; that I must not fear it could change, for that it had preceded his passion for me which was but an adjunct to the perfect esteem which he had for me; that this passion would render him infinitely wretched if I did not consent to see him as often as was possible, until, freed from his chains, he could put his designs into execution.

I conjured him to reflect again on a matter so important and so beset with difficulties, and told him that if, after having sufficiently considered them, he persisted in wishing to engage himself to me for ever, I believed myself at liberty to see as much of him as our situation permitted, being persuaded that he would maintain all the respect due to the esteem he bore for me. He swore that his respect and submission should be always the chief evidence of the devotion which he dedicated to me for his whole life.

This agreement made, we separated. I remained with heart and soul so full that there was movement neither in the one nor the other. I could not think nor even feel, save confusedly. This chaos presently cleared away. I discerned that I was keenly touched by the sentiments which had been disclosed to me; I saw a deliverer who was come to break the chains of my bondage, free me from a captivity more opposed to my manner of existence than that which I then suffered and fill the measure of my happiness by associating my life with his.

'Tis only in the guise of sovereign good that objects have the right to inspire a passion in us; they can only take possession of our whole soul in presenting themselves under this aspect. I believed I had found this good beyond compare, which our desires pursue without ceasing, and never overtake. I knew not then that it does not exist in the world; I thought that it must reside in a constant and well assorted union. Seduced by this flattering illusion, I allowed myself to be overcome by a passion more lively than that I had inspired. I placed no obstacle in its progress, and, so far from being alarmed, I made it the measure of the happiness I promised myself. It is needful to keep in mind the divers circumstances of my situation, both actual and previous, to understand

how I permitted sentiments which, it would seem, I ought easily to have mastered to attain such an empire over me.

The day after this conversation I received a letter from the Chevalier de Menil, fuller than ever of everything that could touch and reassure me. We saw each other by chance in the lodging of the Lieutenant of the King, who was ill. We had each separately asked his permission to pay him a visit and the favour to be conducted to his apartment. Menil went there first; I then proposed my visit, which was at once accepted.

Maisonrouge, who suspected nothing of our understanding, was enchanted at this chance encounter. It caused me a joy so extreme that the moment remains in my memory as one of the most agreeable of my life. The secret of our connection, hidden from this interested witness who had tied the first knots, added I know not what of piquancy to the delight which we tasted in seeing one another. It lasted but a little while, for nothing lasts, above all in that place. Uneasiness allows nothing else to endure. We found means to see each other again in the following days. His intentions, his protestations, were reiterated to me. I accepted them and allowed him to see my sentiments, which were received with vast satisfaction. I felt no less content in having no longer to hide

them. We agreed to see each other as often as we could without imprudence, and to write to one another as often as it should be possible.

Our dear Rondel lent us her aid in conveying and receiving our letters, in judging the fit moments for us to meet, and in guarding against surprises. She had a sufficiently good opinion of me to be sure that I should not form any such connection but on a proper basis, and would not have lent herself thereto if she had not had good grounds, from what I let her see, for judging favourably of it.

The Chevalier de Menil had discovered as well as I that Maisonrouge loved me passionately. We felt how important it was to conceal from him our correspondence, which he no longer controlled. The more interesting letters which we now wrote gave us a distaste for those which passed through his hands. He remarked on our negligence in this matter and reproached me with it. I wrote some farther ones to allay his suspicions and give colour to the apparent cessation of our writing.

But these letters became insupportable and dropped altogether. We wrote to each other and snatched moments of conversation. I recall one interview which I have never been able to forget, wherein, on my expressing to M. de Menil a

thousand fears, a thousand alarms, at having yielded to my sentiments on prospects perchance so uncertain, he offered to support by a written engagement the assurances he had given me of his intent.

“ Alas ! ” cried I, “ what good would that be ? If you preserve your inclination for me, you will follow the resolutions it has made you take ; if you lose it, would I oppose your words to your sentiments, and live with you unless you were in full accord with me ? ”

I had imagined in speaking thus that I was assuming the impossible. The harmony between us seemed so perfect that it recalled to me the idea of souls created double who are forever seeking each other, but who find each other rarely, and whose happy encounter makes perfect felicity. I told him this fancy, which he adopted as truly characteristic of our bond. At this time I experienced a happiness hitherto unknown to me. I had previously loved without being loved, or I had been loved by one who pleased me not. I had never until then known the charm of a mutual attachment, which seemed to me to be unchanging. The character of the Chevalier de Menil, his reputation, his circumspect behaviour, his age, — already far enough removed from that at which one entangles oneself without knowing either what one

wishes or is doing, — warranted his constancy and the honesty of his promises. I had no uneasiness save that which sprang up in our path from a soil so fit to produce it and yield it continual increase. Such anxiety we suffered at every moment ; the least noise threatened formidable events ; a more gloomy look from a jealous master (for he became so without knowing with what good cause) portended the most sombre things.

The arrangement we had made to see each other continued until the Duc de Richelieu was transferred from a tower where he had been placed at first to an apartment above that of the Chevalier de Menil. The proximity of a man so alert obliged us to take the greatest precautions. The Lieutenant of the King thought it his duty to guard more carefully the keys which he had been accustomed to leave in my door as the occupants of the quarter must pass it to go for their airing. Although they were always well guarded, he did not wish to leave this object of scandal before their eyes.

The reader (if ever this wretched manuscript has a reader) may prefer to know wherefore the Duc de Richelieu was lodged in the Bastille, and the details of his case, rather than the trifles which concern me ; but I am not sufficiently well informed to give him an account of it. I know only

that like us, and without our participation, he had intrigued with Spain, and that, despite the severest usage, the long and frequent torture to which he was submitted, and all the cunning that was employed to take him unaware, even to forged letters from a princess who was interested in him, they could not master his secret; and that in the end, by means of court intrigues, in which love played a great part, he obtained his liberty, and, while awaiting it, numerous alleviations of his captivity.

This more commodious lodging which was given him, and the liberty to go out for his airing, brought about the reform which afflicted us. It had been previously enforced when the ministers were to appear, but this was only occasionally, and had always been a difficult day for us to pass. There is no habit which we contract so easily as that of seeing one whom we love; nor is there anything which becomes so necessary, however little we may have the habit of it. I began thus to undergo the trials which attend upon the passions and render the experience of them so painful. I had already suffered one vexation by reason of the fancies of Menil, who, contrary to all reason, took offense from time to time at the favours I could not dispense with shewing to our Lieutenant. Still I lessened them as much as was possible. I

had revoked the permission to come and visit me after supper on the pretext that I desired to go to sleep at an earlier hour. He resisted nothing that I wished. So on my side it was necessary sometimes to yield to what he desired.

One day when he had brought some game and was supping with me, Menil, who had the means of opening his door, came to listen at mine. He pretended that I had been very gay, and that I had spoken of him with an offensive levity. But that which displeased him more than all was that in rising from the table, as it was extremely hot, we placed ourselves at the window. The Lieutenant proposed that I should sing. I began a scene from the opera of *Iphigenia*. The Duc de Richelieu, also at his window, sang the response of Orestes in that scene which was singularly appropriate to our situation. Maisonrouge, who thought that this amused me, and who perchance was willing to divert himself, allowed us to finish the scene. It in no wise diverted the Chevalier de Menil. The day following, in his letters, he questioned me of the conversation at supper, which I knew not he had overheard. I no longer remembered that mention had been made of him, and said nothing on the subject. This appeared to him a concealment which so outrageously offended him that he wished me to break with Maisonrouge. However

I made him understand so distinctly the great inconveniences that would arise from so doing that he was appeased.

We were not long without finding means to meet again. The discipline grew lax, as it always does. We resumed very nearly our ordinary mode of life. This little absence, cheered by frequent letters, served but to give greater zest to our satisfaction in seeing one another again. We rejoiced in it for a few days quietly enough. The gloomy humour of the lieutenant persuaded us that he suspected us and closed his eyes. This opinion rendered us less circumspect. After having been imprudent, we became bold. We prolonged our interviews and were several times in danger of being surprised. Finally, one evening when Menil wished to retire for fear of accident, I indiscreetly retained him. A moment later, and earlier than usual, the turn-keys, who had long had suspicions of us, came to give the last turn to the keys in our doors, and carried them with the others to the apartment of the Lieutenant of the King.

I cannot describe the shock I had when I heard them locking us in. What to do in so difficult a juncture? All that I saw clearly was that the Chevalier de Menil must not remain shut up in my chamber. For him to have been with me during the daytime would only have been an infraction

of a rule or local custom; but to pass the night there would have made a scandal any where. And how to get him out? The doors were barricaded in a way to make any attempt in that quarter futile. The windows were not more accessible. I had none other resource than the mercy of poor Maisonrouge, grievously injured in the present occasion. At length I armed myself with the courage that so pressing a necessity demanded, and I awaited at my window his return from the governor's, where he was supping.

As soon as he entered the court-yard I called to him, and said that I begged he would come to wish me good-night. He ran to his room to fetch my key, and came to me transported with joy at this unaccustomed favour. I advanced to meet him; his rival, a little withdrawn, did not at once present himself to view. I said to him in the most embarrassed manner in the world :

“ You taught my neighbour the way to my room; he has taken it indiscreetly without you. They have locked us in; you would not leave him here; deliver me from him, I beseech you. ”

At the first word I spoke, he perceived the Chevalier de Menil and changed countenance; the gay air with which he had entered instantly took the most gloomy tincture, and he said to us in a very dry tone that we were putting him in an

extremely embarrassing situation; that he could not go fetch the keys of M. de Menil's room, redescend and open it without his servants and those of the house perceiving it and forming suspicions as disadvantageous for him as for me. I admitted that he had reason to complain of our imprudence; I avowed my error and promised not to fall into it again; I implored his friendship as my sole resource. He quitted me without further speech, went to fetch the keys, returned to get Menil, who was more disconcerted than any of us, shut him up in his room and came not again to mine.

This expedition accomplished, I was mightily relieved, though much cause for uneasiness remained to me. The just indignation of the man to whom I was under so many obligations, and whom I had exposed, for the sake of following my whims, to the reproach of betraying his office by shameful complaisance; my dissembling toward him when he had given himself to me without reserve :

Improbe Amor, quid non mortalia pectora cogis?

in fine this cruel tyrant was himself lamenting at the bottom of my heart over my separation from the object whom he had rendered so dear to me.

I made no doubt that the Lieutenant, engaged both by his honour and his jealousy to guard

me, would watch us closely enough to render any attempt on our part useless. This poor success disgusted me with all hazardous steps; I limited myself to our commerce by letters, which was easy and became more frequent.

Maisonrouge came to see me as usual and said nothing concerning what had passed. He found me sad and forebore to ask the reason, which he knew too well. I was sometimes unjust enough to hate him, and perhaps he perceived it without allowing it, however, to change his behaviour toward me, abounding in assiduity to serve me, and forethought for all that I might desire. He obtained news for me of Madame de Grieu and of others who were dear to me, and gave me all the little liberties that were compatible with his duty and with propriety. During the moments when my reason was in the ascendant, it drew me toward him, ever accompanied by a sense of the gratitude I owed him.

Menil, however, who had not so much at stake as I, sought unremittingly the means of renewing our intercourse. He won over by money, by promises, I know not how, one of the turnkeys; these are the servants who wait upon the prisoners, carry them their food and all the things which they need; the keys of the rooms are in their hands during the whole day. This one, then, in leaving my cham-

ber, but counterfeited to lock the door, and Menil entered while the Lieutenant was dining with the governor. I was terrified to see him, I wished to send him back; he reassured me by saying that the measures he had taken were free from all risk; I believed him because I desired to believe him. The joy of seeing him again overset my wise reflections which forbade such perilous interviews. This one was most brief and we repeated it with great precaution. I would not expose myself at the evening hour which had been so fatal to us, and we conducted our folly (for it was a grave one for us to see each other again) as rationally as possible. But, if we saw one another rarely, we wrote to one another incessantly; the great leisure we enjoyed could be filled with no more interesting occupation.

The first letters that we wrote in this new phase of our commerce were not returned to me. The Chevalier de Menil, more timid then, burned them. More inured later or more desirous of preserving them, he omitted this act of prudence and returned them to me when I had occasion to demand them. I shall relate in due time what preserved them from the fire, whither they were justly destined, and made me keep them.

The trifling facts which they contain form the tissue of this adventure. They are the original documents that prove its reality and the source from

which I have obtained many of the events that had escaped me. They will serve in place of our conversations, ever disturbed by our fear, curtailed by our prudence, shorter and less connected than our written interviews, and almost completely effaced from my memory.

Our idleness produced an innumerable multitude of these letters. The passion to which I thought I could yield myself, without offending in any way against reason or virtue, there found unreserved expression. I was addressing one to whom I already thought myself bound by the most sacred ties, awaiting but the end of our captivity to render this engagement indissoluble and authentic.

At the beginning of our connection I tasted perfect happiness without foreseeing the smallest mishap, when, one evening believing ourselves more secure than ever, since the Lieutenant of the King had gone to Vincennes to dine with the Marquis du Châtelet, his friend and former colonel, M. le Blanc came to the Bastille to say to the governor that he had need of an explanation of a certain declaration which had been made to the Chevalier de Menil and that he must speak to him concerning it immediately. The governor, who was at table, left his dinner, and ran so quickly that Menil, who was with me when we perceived that he was going to his room, had not time to regain it. The gover-

nor did not find him there; but Menil followed him thither closely enough to receive the full fury of his wrath, some of which rebounded upon me. After this first discharge, which was violent, he executed the commission of the Minister and carried the answer to him, but did not mention to him the accident that had occurred, as it would have been charged to his lack of vigilance. But, as soon as M. le Blanc was gone, he had the Chevalier transferred to a tower and lodged in a species of dungeon at a great distance from my apartment.

The harshness of this treatment, and the ill appearance of so precipitate a removal, afflicted me overwhelmingly. I gave myself up, contrary to my habit, to tears and despair. Never had a feeling of such agony penetrated my soul; I felt as if it were divided from itself without hope of reunion.

I imagined M. de Menil as afflicted as myself. His distress not only doubled mine, but made it immeasurable. The physical discomforts he would undergo in that frightful abode, joined to the torments of his soul, made me fear for his health and even for his life: for the mind once beside itself stops at nothing. The uncertainty of all of these things, on which probably I should be able to obtain no light, put the finishing touch to my misfortune.

Maisonrouge's absence on that day left me with no consolation. Despite the injury I had done him, I still expected every thing from him, nor was I deceived, except in so much as he greatly surpassed my hopes. He came to me in the evening as soon as he was returned. The governor had already acquainted him with what had passed. The tender sympathy he felt for the situation I was in allowed neither anger nor resentment against my offences to rise in his heart, or he conquered them so well that I saw no indication of them. He grieved with me over the misfortunes that had befallen me and assured me that he would devote himself with all his heart to anything that could serve to console me.

Sensibly affected to find such favourable dispositions in one from whom I had so ill merited them, I concealed not my sentiments from him; I believed I might pour them into the bosom of so perfect a friend. It seemed to me that whatever bitterness they might occasion him would be assuaged by this proof of my esteem and confidence, and that, far from dealing him fresh wounds by the avowal of what he was not ignorant of, I would be applying to those he had received the only remedy that was in my power. I determined then upon a frank confession. I said to M. de Maisonrouge that I owed my acquaint-

tance with the Chevalier de Menil to his assiduity in furnishing me with distractions in my misfortunes; that I had expected, as he, but to gain a simple amusement from it; that habit and lack of occupation had made me little by little cling to what had at first but diverted me; that he had shewn for me an affection which had touched me, and that at length I had felt one for him which had led me into all the errors he had seen me commit, and I begged him to pardon them.

I was silent. He remained for a time as through overwhelmed by the confusion of his own feelings. The tenderness which this evidence of my confidence and remorse aroused was visible in his face; at length, making an effort to explain himself :

“ My dear friend ”, he said (’twas thus he always called me), “ you know that I am yours. I am going to give you indubitable proof of it, but you must tell me what are your engagements with M. de Menil. If his intention is to render your lot happier, since mine is not worthy to be offered you, I will lend myself without reserve to anything that will conduce to your happiness or even to your simple satisfaction. If the Chevalier de Menil has no other views than to please you, it would not be worthy either you or me for you to hold any commerce with him by means of my

office; and for your own sake you should think only of breaking with him. ”

“ From the moment ”, I replied, “ that the Chevalier de Menil sought to quit the tone of pleasantry with which we began, I would not listen to him, and persisted in my refusal till he made me see that his intention was to unite his fortune to mine. I represented to him all the inconveniences of this, and ’twas not till he had convinced me that such was verily his design that I consented to form this connection with him. No other mark of his attachment could ever have induced me to belie the conduct I have always maintained. It is true I did not believe that I was deviating from it in returning sentiments that are in accord with virtue and could never allow me to forget it. ”

“ But why hide from me ”, returned Maison-rouge, “ from me whom they call your guardian (some of my friends had given him this name), from me who wish you well so fervently, the views that would conduce to that end? Could you doubt that I would not forward them with all my power? ”

“ Do not impute to me ”, I replied, “ this mystery that has cost me so dear. It was exacted of me so imperatively I should scarce dare to reveal it to you now, if what I owe to your friendship

and my honour did not constrain me thereto. ”

“ The Chevalier de Menil cannot have thought ”, continued Maisonrouge, “ that I should censure his designs, nor fear that I should thwart them. But let us discourse no more of it; let us consider what I can do to deliver you from the difficulty you are in ”.

“ I am affronted at the governor ”, I said to him, “ for the fuss he has made. Prisoners are all eyes, all ears; you shut them up in vain, they discover all that happens; they fancy themselves concerned in the least movement, they perceive and follow it to the end. Do not doubt but that every one here knows of the sudden removal of the Chevalier de Menil and construes it ill with respect to me. Make the governor understand, I beseech you, how much reason I have to complain of his having involved me in a history which, if not cleared up, may do me much harm. Say to him that I wish to speak to him myself and engage him in a promise to come and see me ”

“ I go instantly ”, Maisonrouge replied; “ I shall also see the Chevalier de Menil and give you an exact account of all that relates to him; depend absolutely upon me. ”

He quitted me and I fell again into the dejection of spirits from which the necessity of conversing with him had roused me.

All the ills I was experiencing, all those I feared, pressed upon me so closely that I could not breathe. Poor Rondel did what she could to console me with wise discourse and vain hopes; but I heard nothing save the confused sound of the passions that agitated me. I passed a cruel night. The horror of the darkness seemed to give new force to the objects that tormented me. As soon as day broke I allowed myself the relief, and it was one, of writing a letter to Menil which I could not convey to him. I wrote him yet another while in this unhappy situation. He did not receive these two till long afterward.

I saw the Lieutenant again the following day. He apprised me that the Chevalier de Menil, exasperated at the infamous treatment he had received, had expressed himself very hotly on the subject to the governor and had greatly incensed him. Maisonrouge acquainted me with this distressing news as gently as possible.

I was sensible of the discomfort this would prepare for Menil. The Lieutenant related to me that at the moment of our catastrophe M. le Blanc had brought a letter of permission for the Chevalier de Menil to be placed in company with the Duc de Richelieu (from whom they were desirous of loosening the bonds) and for them both to dine at the governor's table alternately with the

Marquis de Pompadour's and the Marquis de Boisdavis' set, which had a day for going there; that the governor, without speaking of it to the Minister, had determined not to give this liberty to M. de Menil. I was extremely vexed to see him deprived of this alleviation of his captivity, so qualified to dissipate his present melancholy. I conjured the Lieutenant to do his utmost to reconcile him with the governor, to the end that he might at least enjoy the favours of the Minister and not endure fresh hardships. He promised me to use his best endeavours, and did so, in fine, with success. He informed me of the vexations of M. de Menil, of the state of his health, of what ever concerned him, with all the exactitude I could wish; apprised me of what he had said to the governor on his behalf, told me that I should see him and that I should do well to signify to him my just resentment without forgetting the prudence necessary in dealing with people on whom one is dependent.

He came indeed; I said to him that, after having received so many marks of consideration from him, I had not had reason to expect that, regardless of the injury done to my reputation, he would proclaim with so much publicity an irregularity of conduct on my part, which was such only because of the place I inhabited; that, since I had

lived in the world, I had received indifferently the persons who came to see me, both men and women, without giving a shadow of scandal; that, since I had been there, my maid, who was imprisoned with me, assured the decorum of any visits I might receive; that, the thing being innocent in itself, I had not merited that it should assume an equivocal appearance from the noise that had been made about it. I sought in vain to make him understand that what was a fault in a prisoner was not one according to the ordinary laws and usages of society; he knew no regulations save those of the jail and would never allow the distinction; he ever maintained that after so criminal a breach I should be grateful to him for not being treated more severely. I knew he longed to say that he ought to have put me in a dungeon. This was so common a threat there that they made it to any dog that howled.

After the like discourse we parted, but moderately pleased with each other, and lived together thereafter coldly enough. He had shewn much assiduity toward me in the beginning; but the rumour having spread even to the Palais-Royal that he wished to marry Mademoiselle de Montauban, of which he had no intention, he withdrew from his captives; and, since I had perceived that he was a bear who was

not to be tamed, I had entirely neglected him.

The Lieutenant of the King redoubled his efforts to please me. Not content with what he had already done and seeking to procure for me fresh consolation, he had the Chevalier de Menil write me a letter which he brought me. I was surprised at an action so singular on the part of a man who was in love and jealous.

“ I should have been content ”, I said to him, “ to hear the news of M. de Menil which you gave me; it was not necessary to go beyond that. ”

“ No ”, he replied, “ you will be more reassured by the testimony of his own hand than by what you could obtain from me : write him an answer, I will carry it to him, and I promise to procure for you this gratification so long as your separation lasts. ”

He then told me that he was seeking to effect a reconciliation between the Chevalier de Menil and the governor; that everything promised well, and that he hoped he should ere long enjoy the society which had been allotted to him.

All these things cheered my spirits. I had felt great joy on beholding Menil's writing again, the sight of which I had been deprived of for several days. I experienced not less on writing him a letter which would reach him. To lighten my

grief, I had written several which had remained in my hands. This one, of a more constrained style, would have a happier fate. I might not say therein what I thought, but it was conversing with him none the less.

Our generous friend returned for it. I gave it to him open, as had been that which he had brought me. This exertion of his complaisance should be treated with discretion on my side. I also ever awaited a proposal from him to perform a service which cost him so dear. He has since owned to me that each time he took or delivered our letters 'twas like plunging a dagger into his heart. He was none the less punctual, however, in observing the order he had established for our commerce. He brought me a letter, took my answer the next day and on the day following fetched me another.

M. de Menil, reconciled with the governor, was in possession of the privileges accorded him by the Court. He went to dine at the governor's table with the Duc de Richelieu every other day, and passed a part of the day in the apartment of that agreeable companion. He could not go thither without passing my door. This opportunity of giving me more private news of himself than that which passed through strange hands tempted him. He dropped a billet in which he

besought me with pressing insistence to reply to him in the same manner. I was sensible of great repugnancy to this, less because of the aversion I had taken to hazardous steps than because this furtive commerce bore the stamp of treason toward so generous a friend. I yielded, nevertheless, impelled by that debasing passion which weakens all our virtues, and should be odious to us in proportion as it renders us despicable.

It is true that at first I made use but seldom of the new means open to me; then I accustomed myself to it by repetition. It chanced now and then that I met Menil on his way to or from the apartment of the Duc de Richelieu; this was an event in my life. Poor Maisonrouge managed some of these encounters for us, which, though brief, were very precious to us. I did not long enjoy this privilege; some repairs that had to be made in my room obliged me to quit it. Another was proposed to me which would have offered me the same facilities: the fear of abusing them, rather than the apprehension of a noise incompatible with sleep, made me refuse it. They lent me the lodging of the captain of our company of guards, where I could no longer hold communication with the Chevalier de Menil.

All of our fellow prisoners had enjoyed for some time a species of liberty, forming separate

societies, in the midst of which they lived. I was advised to demand the same favour; I would not. It seemed to me that the best part for me to play was one of entire inaction. At the most I might bring myself to accept favours from the hand that held me in irons; but I thought it vile to sue for them, and shameful to appear so weary of myself as to seek indifferent company which I foresaw would be more of a burden than a pleasure to me. The only thing I could do to show some sort of deference to the counsel which was given me was to write the following letter to M. Le Blanc :

Monseigneur,

It is neither impatience nor weariness that urges me to intrude upon you; what determines me thereto is the justifiable apprehension that a person so obscure as myself may be totally forgotten: this fear is the better founded as it is scarce likely that the motives for my detention should keep alive the memory of it. I flatter myself that they are as little notable as my person; and, being of this opinion, I have thought it perhaps necessary to remind you that I was taken to the Bastille toward the end of the year 1718, and that I am still here. When I know, Monseigneur, that you remember this, I shall leave

the rest to your equity and to your charitable disposition; content, in whatever situation I may be, to obey the laws imposed upon me, and to honour the sovereign power by a voluntary submission to its commands.

I have the honour to remain with profound respect, Monseigneur,

The humblest and most obedient of your servants.

This 16th of August, 1719.

This letter produced no effect, such was my intention; but the Marquise de Pompadour's importunities to the Ministers to enlarge the society of her husband brought it to pass that I was admitted to his company. I went consequently with him and the Marquis de Boisdavis to dine at the governor's on the day set apart for us. They permitted my companion to eat with them that I might not be the only woman in a party of men. It was proposed to me to have the table set in my room on the day that the other band of captives went to the governor. I preferred rather to establish our repast for that day in M. de Pompadour's apartment in order to escape the eternal stay that these idle men would have made in my room. The Duc de Richelieu had then regained his liberty by the sacrifice of a beautiful victim who,

it was asserted, had voluntarily immolated herself for that end.

Since his departure they had placed the Chevalier de Menil with the Marquis de Saint-Geniez and Davisard, one of the officers of our court. The latter sent me word that he desired passionately to have a moment's interview with me. I made no doubt that he had something of importance to communicate to me, the knowledge of which might determine the course of my actions.

I was not willing, however, to tempt the complaisance of the Lieutenant of the King on an occasion compromising to his duty, which I respected in all that was essential as much as he himself. I had recourse to deceit, ever permissible to people deprived of the natural rights of society.

The Marquis de Saint-Geniez lodged in the same tower as the Marquis de Pompadour. I thought that Davisard, feigning to go to the apartment of Saint-Geniez, whom he was permitted to see, might mount a story higher to M. de Pompadour, whither I should betake myself as I was in the habit of doing. There was only question of choosing our time well, and of informing my associates to the end that they might lend a hand to this meeting. Consequently I communicated to M. de Pompadour and de Boisdavis the interview I was meditating. I excited their expect-

tations of what I should learn and of the likely to be of use to the whole party who might gather from it. The Marquis de Pompadour, in raptures to serve me in so important juncture, devoured beforehand the abundant vest we were going to reap. I conveyed this scheme to Davisard. The execution of it was awaited with equal impatience on both our parts; but we had to select a day when one of our masters was gone to the country and the other so occupied that he had nothing to fear.

This day arrived. We placed at all the openings of the staircase what servants we had, as sentinels to give us warning at the least alarm. All our measures well taken, we sent word to Davisard who awaited the moment in the apartment of Saint-Geniez. He mounted immediately to the room of the Marquis de Pompadour, who, as soon as he saw him appear, withdrew with M. de Boisdeffre to a corner of the chamber, thinking that matters of such monstrous importance could not be discussed before witnesses. Davisard, after having turned his head on all sides to discover if he could be overheard, approached and said to me:

“ Mademoiselle de Launay, nine months of solitary confinement, that is very hard? ”

“ Eh! Monsieur ”, I replied to him, struck

with amazement, "is that then what you were in so prodigious a hurry to say to me?"



This beginning having frightened me, I called our discreet friends and told them they might approach and take part in our conversation. They discussed the present conditions of which our little magistrate knew no more than we. Seeing the small profit we were likely to gain from this perilous interview, I put an end to it promptly, ashamed to have contrived it with so much care.

An experience that I had had some time before should have made me less a fool. I was suffering from a slight disorder for which M. Herment, the physician of the Bastille, attended me. The Lieutenant of the King presented him to me in the gar-

den where we were walking. Although I was under the strictest guard, our Lieutenant related willingly in my favour on the slightest pretext authorized him thereto, and he withdrew from saying :

“ A third person is not desirable in an interview with one's physician. ”

I continued my way and withdrew still far from M. Herment, seeing that no one could observe me, said to me, lowering his voice and squeezing my hand :

“ You have friends, and good friends, capable of every thing for your sake ; I have seen one who interests himself prodigiously in all that relates to you... ”

“ Has he charged you with anything for me ? ” I said, interrupting him.

“ Yes ”, replied he, “ he knows my discretion, I know yours. He told me to ask you what would give you pleasure, would be useful to you ; if you had not need of a coverlet. ”

“ And who is this friend ”, I asked, “ who is so concerned to know if I have warm feet here ? ”

“ 'Tis M. Bignon ”, returned he, “ Councillor of State. ”

“ Pray thank him for me ”, I responded, “ and say to him, Monsieur, that what he is anxious about

is the least of the discomforts to which I am exposed. ”

I counterfeited no malady to procure for me the visits of so circumspect a man. There were others in our Château even more tractable; but, as I was in no wise tempted to intrigue with the outer world, I sought them not.

The Comte de Laval made use of his doctor, who also performed the functions of apothecary. In order to have an opportunity of seeing him often, he averred that he needed two visits from him daily. The Regent, who entered into the smallest detail of all that concerned us, examined the reports of our pharmacy with his Ministers, and the Abbé Dubois objected to the number of these visits. The Duc d'Orleans said to him : “ Abbé, since they have no other diversions, let us not take this one away from them. ”

Laval indeed had scarce any other. He was kept more confined than any of us, even during the time when some relaxation was granted to all the other prisoners. 'Tis true that after he was in the Bastille he behaved heroically; that he underwent long and frequent examinations with as much courage as dexterity in his responses. But it was affirmed, perhaps falsely, that he had descended to trickery before being arrested and that he had made false disclosures in order to escape detention.

However this may be, he sustained to the end of his imprisonment, which was much longer than that of the others, the steadfast conduct that he had assumed on entering.

I continued all this time my commerce by letter with the Chevalier de Menil through the Lieutenant of the King. I received now and then more unreserved ones through his valet, whom Menil had won over. I was solely occupied with him, and the company which haunted me was often insupportable to me, above all in moments of depression which I could not master. I experienced a very severe attack of low spirits at a design which the Chevalier de Menil confided to me of buying an annuity with a reimbursement that had been made to him. This view seemed to me totally opposed to what was the object and the mainstay of our connection. I began to have suspicions of his good faith, which had found no entrance hitherto into my mind. I gave free utterance to these in several letters, and, as he wished not to lose me yet, he took the part of reassuring me by changing his plan and making fresh protestations of the honesty and firmness of his intentions. I believed him. Ah! Who does not believe when desirous of believing? He confirmed my faith by making the acquisition of a small estate in place of the annuity to which he had at first inclined.

I regained my full confidence and endured no further torments but from the continuation of our separation, at which I was the more piqued because of the easy access of many persons whom I viewed with an indifferent eye. They did not regard me in the same light, and this but added to my impatience. If a gardener, as an excellent author has remarked, is a man to the nuns, a woman, whoever she may be, is a goddess to prisoners. Ours, in effect, offered me a sort of worship; but their earnest vows and incense were often like to suffocate me.

At this juncture, Davisard, who was a boisterous and petulant man, lively both of body and mind, and more incapable of remaining in one spot than of multiplying himself in order to occupy several at the same time, fell quite dangerously ill. This was told and perhaps exaggerated to the Regent. He had a repugnancy to anything violent and had no mind to have his prisoners play him the trick of dying in prison. To avoid this accident Davisard was set at liberty.

"Is it not a cheat!" he cried, when he saw the order of release.

"No", replied the governor, who brought it to him, "it is genuine."

"Stockings, breeches, quick, quick!" he cried throwing himself out of bed.

His dress, his flight, his cure, were all effected in a moment.

This departure gave occasion to Madame de Pompadour, ever alert to cheer the weariness of her husband, to request that the company of M. de Pompadour should be enlarged by those remaining from that of M. Davisard, who had had for associates the Marquis de Saint-Geniez and the Chevalier de Menil, and that these two united sets should make but one, which should dine every day with the governor and live together. It was granted her, and, when I the least expected it, I saw Menil enter my room without precaution. I was surprised and frightened; he reassured me in apprising me of the happy event, which overwhelmed me with joy, despite the dejection I was in at my sister's death, the circumstances of which had filled my heart with bitterness. One must own to the shame of nature that her voice scarce makes itself heard if any passion speaks at the same time with her.

MM. de Pompadour and de Boisdavis came a moment after to congratulate me on the enlargement of our party. The Lieutenant of the King was gone that day to dine at Vincennes; upon returning he came to see me without knowing the privilege that had been granted to the Chevalier de Menil. When he saw him in my room in such

good company and with the appearance of every right to be there, he remained as one thunder-struck, without speech or movement. I was affected at his distress, and, approaching, I related to him that Madame de Pompadour had prevailed upon them to place us all together. He knew that she was soliciting this favour, but knew not that leave was so close at hand. He said to us in a tolerably forced tone that it was well and made us his compliments on it. He could not pronounce another word, and remained upon the chair where he had sat himself down like a man petrified. The gaiety of the assembly completed his confusion; unable to bear so painful a situation, he quitted us.

The relations I had held till then with the Chevalier de Menil, how painful soever they may have been to Maisonrouge, were softened by his satisfaction of signalling thereby his affection for me, and of himself contriving our commerce. The dependence that resulted therefrom, the entire knowledge of our actions which set a limit to his uneasiness, were so many compensations lost to him by our reunion. He had no longer anything to expect but our gratitude for past services, now grown useless.

Changed and broken with sorrow, he came to me (on the following morning) at a time when I was alone.

“ My dear friend ”, he said to me, “ you are now happy. I have wished it; I am content; but your joy costs me dear. Live in peace with one who loves you and who pleases you. Ask not that I should be witness of it. So long as I could be of use to you, I surmounted my repugnancy with inconceivable effort; I would do so yet if it could serve you. You have no longer need of me; do not take it amiss if I do not come to you save when decorum or any service that I might still render you obliges me thereto. ”

“ Why abandon me, my dear friend? ” I said to him; “ do you imagine that anything could compensate me for the loss I would suffer in losing you? I had rather give up all other commerce if it be incompatible with yours. ”

“ No ”, replied he, “ I wish to deprive you of nothing. I have sacrificed myself without reserve to your happiness; may he who is to secure it be as faithful and devoted as I! ”

I insisted strongly and I prevailed upon him not to cease to see me. I promised to conceal from his gaze anything like to wound him. I took pains, in fact, that he should not meet the Chevalier de Menil when he came; ’twas seldom. He presented himself but when he had news from outside to acquaint me with, or something to say to me on the part of my friends who came to see him toler-

ably often. However, I saw him every day at the governor's, where we all passed part of the day.

We went there to dinner, and after dinner I played at ombre with MM. de Pompadour and Boisdavis, and Menil advised me. The game sometimes arranged itself otherwise. When it was finished, we returned to our own rooms. The Chevalier de Menil followed me tolerably soon. The company reassembled in my room before supper, for which we returned to the governor's, after which each went to bed. In the morning I again met Menil and we hardly quitted each other.

I desired no longer any other liberty than that which I enjoyed. It did not occur to me that there was any other world than the one bounded by our walls. It is the only happy time I have spent in my life. Could I have believed that happiness awaited me there, and that nowhere else should I find it?

I loved one by whom I believed myself truly loved. I abandoned myself without fear to sentiments of which the object appeared to me worthy, and the end secure. I could sooner have feared that the heavens would fall than that any change could occur in the heart of the Chevalier de Menil. I had the same certainty with regard to his conduct; the rules which I prescribed for his

behaviour he observed exactly. I told him in the first days, when we met without restraint, that the terrors which had pursued us hitherto, every time that we had been able to see each other, had been a sure guard which we were about to lose; that I would however take no security for his behaviour but himself, being persuaded that, having determined to pass his life with me, he would not lower me in his esteem, that without it I was determined on no condition whatsoever to live with him. He assured me that he would respect my confidence to the degree of avoiding, even should he have to leave my presence, everything that could displease me in a passion sufficiently fierce to be sometimes inconsiderate.

Thus I established my security on a better foundation than mere assumption, which is so elevated and has so little base that it is easy to overturn. Menil kept his word. Sometimes he would leave me somewhat abruptly in the midst of a tender discourse. I asked for no reason nor did I attempt to retain him. His respect touched me far more than the most passionate transports would have done. I tasted consequently that sweet peace which constitutes true happiness. The only thing lacking was absolute certainty that I should enjoy it always, which I did not then call into question.

The repairs of my apartment being finished, I returned to it and contemplated furnishing it. I thought it was enough to have passed one winter in a large room without hangings; the second approached. M. de Maisonrouge, more attentive than ever to my comforts now that he no longer was concerned for my diversions, demanded of M. le Duc du Maine's man of business furniture for my lodging. They lent it to him, and I took great delight in settling myself in my ancient haunt, transformed. I was singularly touched to find a shelf to the new fireplace they had made, whereon I could put a book or a snuff-box, a convenience which hitherto I had lacked. One must have been deprived of everything to know the value of each trifle.

Our society profited by my change of abode. It assembled more easily in my apartment, and indeed so continually that I was often weary of it, and in such ill humour that Menil reprimanded me severely without regard for the cause, which merited more indulgence on his part.

He had long since returned to inhabit our quarter. The facility of seeing each other, the length of our conversations, gave us leisure to introduce therein indifferent matters. He shewed me, to divert me, some tolerably ridiculous letters which he received by indirect means from one of his rela-

tives, who, on her own shewing, was madder than her letters. She lived near his home at Anjou. I paid little attention to what he told me of her, not imagining that I should ever have to do with such a person. Although communication with the outer world



was interdicted us, despite the kind of liberty we were allowed, the news stealthily obtained by each of us, and shared in common like the booty of brigands, served as ample provender for us in the bottom of our den. We gathered above all with avidity any which promised our near deliverance. I made believe as a matter of honour to desire it with the others, though at the bottom of my heart I was far from doing so.







Lalauge & Co.

THE ORDER OF RELEASE



MADAME DEUCHESS DE MAINE, who was at first married to the Count of Dijon, exclaimed, "Alas, when she understood that she was being introduced into the possession of M. le Duc :

The fury of Juno Jupiter abandons me.

She had five millions there, in the midst of which she had never known how to support them, she had recourse to Madame de Pompadour to obtain the necessary instructions and means of abode. At the same time this would bring her into the





MADAME la Duchesse du Maine, who was at first carried to the citadel of Dijon, exclaimed with Io, when she understood that she was being conducted into the jurisdiction of M. le Duc :

To the fury of Juno Jupiter abandons me.

She passed five months there, in the midst of such discomforts as she had hitherto never known. Finding herself unable farther to support them, she persuaded Madame la Princesse to obtain for her by her solicitations a change of abode. She trusted that at the same time this would bring her nearer

the capital; but she had no other choice than to go to the citadel of Châlon, a little farther removed, or to remain where she was. There was matter for deliberation. She had established in this place useful correspondence by means of persons who at their own risk and peril were entirely at her devotion.

A princess endowed with great qualities, overwhelmed by great misfortunes, is a striking figure capable of moving the least sensitive souls. She would be like to find everywhere persons animated by the same motives, with the same zeal, but to make themselves known opportunities which are not always forthcoming would be needful, and to serve her the means which also are not in all hands. Despite these considerations, her natural desire to change so distasteful a situation even for one which was no better and might be worse, the desire to go when one is restrained, the opportunity of again seeing the people who must conduct her, determined Madame la Duchesse du Maine to accept Châlon.

Orders were given to make ready a building wherein to lodge her. La Billarderie, who had commanded the troops by whom she was accompanied on her first journey, had orders to be prepared with a detachment of life guards to transfer her to this new prison, where he remained near

her for several days. The confidence with which she honoured him, as soon as she recognized the goodness of his nature, joined to all that would naturally attract him to her, secured his entire devotion. His sentiments, hidden beneath the most profound respect, were perchance unknown even to himself; but this restraint but rendered them the more active. She received from him all the services which an honest man charged with the custody of her could render. He accompanied them with all the favours that could disguise the severity of his commission, which he never exercised to the full, and of which he often changed the form.

Arrived at Châlon, she had the sad spectacle of seeing her prison constructed; this had already occurred in the citadel of Dijon, where the lodging had been uninhabitable. That which was reared before her eyes was found to be even more impracticable, not merely by reason of the dampness of the fresh plaster, but because of its situation, and she did not lodge there. Neither, I believe, did she inhabit that which she saw built at Châlon, where she did not remain long. I knew not of these matters until after her return and mine, but I put them down here to have them as nearly as possible in their place.

Although she had borne her captivity with courage, and, to support the tedium, had partaken of

all the diversions which could be furnished by places so barren of delight, the discomforts and anxieties which she could not avoid disturbed her health. She would say on the occasion of these, her dismal amusements, so different from those to which she was accustomed : " Let M. le Duc d'Orleans judge of my sufferings by my pleasures. "

Although she was watched strictly, she had found means to establish a correspondence by which she was informed of almost everything that passed and even of the rumours that went abroad, and this was usually a new torture. News, of which prisoners are so ravenous, serves as their poison ; they hear one part, and, ignorant of the remainder, they make and unmake a thousand theories based on their imperfect information, whence are born the many chimeras and inquietudes which devour them. The happiest condition for them, according to my experience, is that wherein nothing reaches them.

The rumours that they were about to place M. de Malesieu in the Conciergerie, to stand his trial and to treat his case with extreme rigour, reached Madame la Duchesse du Maine and caused her the most lively alarm. Later, it was said that he was to be confined in the Iles Sainte-Marguerite. They had documents against him in hand, and felt but little goodwill toward him ; this placed

him in greater danger than any one else; for this reason he was in perpetual uneasiness, and it suggested to him ideas too often misguided. He besought me to give testimony that the letter from the king of Spain which had been found among his papers was a translation from the original Spanish. I told him that in all likelihood I should have no opportunity to speak, and that, if I had, I could not persuade myself to say anything so easy to prove false.

Madame la Duchesse du Maine having been about three months at Châlon, the Duc d'Orleans, on the representations which were made to him of the bad state of health of this princess, and not wishing to be accused of allowing her to perish of treatment too severe for a person of her condition, consented that she should go to pass some time at a house in the country. Savigny in Burgundy was proposed to her as an agreeable spot. She asked the president of....., to whom the house belonged, to lend it to her. He feared to offend M. le Duc, the governor of the province, and refused. Another named Sevigny was proposed to her which was lent to Madame la Duchesse du Maine.

M. de La Billarderie returned with his detachment of guards to conduct her, and carried her thither. In the meantime the president who had at first refused his house, having learned that M. le

Duc thought quite otherwise on the matter from what he had supposed, returned to make offer of it. Madame la Duchesse du Maine was for not accepting it; but La Billarderie represented to her that it was to waste resentment to bestow it on such a man and that she would be more comfortable at Savigny. She went, and passed some time there. At length, by fresh entreaties, they obtained permission to bring her nearer to Paris and to give her for a prison Chanley, a fine and agreeable house which was but thirty leagues thence. She sojourned at various country-houses on her way thither, and reached it toward the middle of autumn. Madame la Princesse had permission to go there to see her and passed a fortnight there. Entirely taken up with the desire of putting an end to the captivity of the princess her daughter, she conjured her to avow sincerely all that had taken place in her affair. Madame la Duchesse du Maine gave her an exact account of it by which she convinced her that there had been nothing in all that she had done, either against the King or the State, nor anything which could be essentially prejudicial to the Regent.

Madame la Princesse, upon this statement, counselled her to make an avowal to this Prince with the same openness, as the surest and, perchance, only way of obtaining not merely her own liberty, but

that of all the persons concerned in the same affair who suffered for her. The necessity of releasing from confinement M. le Duc du Maine, who had just been dangerously ill in prison without her knowledge, the risk of seeing him perish there, innocent as he was, were the points chiefly impressed upon her by Madame la Princesse and M. de La Billarderie.

Despite these potent considerations, she insisted continually upon the unseemliness of such a step, and protested that her interest alone should never persuade her thereto, and that, pressing as were the motives which they presented to her, she could not make this confession without knowing whether the persons compromised with her had betrayed themselves; otherwise, she would risk their destruction and her own honour.

It was decided thereupon that, as a necessary preliminary, they must be enlightened upon this point. It was known that M. de Pompadour and the Abbé Brigaut had made ample confessions. If M. de Laval and M. de Malesieu had persisted in denial, they must no longer contemplate a confession which could not be made without implicating these gentlemen, but must present a petition to Parliament, demanding the release of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, in accordance with the laws of the country, which do not permit

the retaining of a person in prison beyond a term set for shewing the cause of their detention. Madame la Duchesse du Maine drew up a model of this petition which she left in the hands of Madame la Princesse.

These resolutions taken, Madame la Princesse assured Madame her daughter that, as soon as she should be in Paris, she would learn positively (and this seemed easy to her) what the Comte de Laval and M. de Malesieu had done; and that she, or the Abbé de Maulevrier, her confidential man, would write it to her forthwith. To treat of this matter without danger, Madame la Duchesse du Maine gave Madame la Princesse some every day phrases to which she attached the meaning of the principal points on which she needed instruction. One of these phrases would stand for : Laval has confessed; the other : He has said nothing. And the same for M. de Malesieu.

A short time after the departure of Madame la Princesse, Madame la Duchesse du Maine received a letter from the Abbé de Maulevrier which signified by means of the cipher that had been agreed upon that M. de Laval and M. de Malesieu had said nothing. Some days later she received another from the Abbé which in the same cipher said quite the contrary : that Laval and Malesieu, after having held out for some time,

had at last confessed. This evidence did not seem sufficiently certain to Madame la Duchesse du Maine to determine the course she should take. La Billarderie, who was still with her, earnestly desiring the liberty of this princess, and persuaded that he might work to some purpose, returned to Paris and had several interviews on this subject with M. le Blanc, who convinced him that she would never succeed but by a full and candid avowal of everything that had passed in the affair, both on her own side and on that of those who had acted in concert with her.

The Regent wished to have done with it, but desired that it should be with honour, that is to say by vindicating him from the charge of having attacked and severely treated without reason persons of so much distinction. He had therefore resolved not to grant liberty, either to the chiefs or to their adherents, without such an admission on their part as would serve as an excuse for his conduct. M. le Blanc finally commissioned La Billarderie to carry word to Madame la Duchesse du Maine on behalf of the Prince that she might obtain her entire freedom and that of all persons implicated in her affair if she would give in writing an exact and truthful account of it which should be seen by none but himself.

La Billarderie went to give account to her of

his errand and carried to her letters from *Madame la Princesse* and the *Abbé de Maulevrier* which stated positively and without cipher that *the Comte de Laval* and *M. de Malesieu* had confessed everything, and that nothing of the affair was not known.

Madame la Duchesse du Maine, persuaded by this evidence which was above suspicion that she could deliver all those of her party and do injury to no one, surmounted on their account the repugnance she felt to making the confession demanded of her. She made it in great detail to give proof of her sincerity. When this document was completed, she placed it in the hands of *La Billarderie* to convey to *M. le Blanc*, after he should have shown it to *Madame la Princesse*, to whom she also wrote at the same time a letter in which she pointed out the motives which had prevailed upon her to do what *M. le Duc d'Orleans* required of her. She conjured the princess to see to the prompt and faithful execution of the promises he had given in return, and represented to her that this concerned not only her interests, but her honour, which was infinitely more dear to her, and that she confided in her care and diligence; being unable to avoid censure for the step she was taking but by the entire satisfaction of all who were interested in it.

Madame la Princesse read the letter and the confession with the Abbé de Maulevrier, who remarked to La Billarderie that the great pains visible in it to justify the Cardinal de Polignac and M. de Malesieu might render its truthfulness dubious. He criticized nothing else, nor did Madame la Princesse. La Billarderie carried it to M. le Blanc to be delivered to the Regent. They hastened to send to Madame la Duchesse du Maine the *lettre de cachet* for her return. In it she found, contrary to her expectation, that her residence was fixed at Sceaux. This first infraction of the promises made her alarmed her for the others.

We knew nothing in our prison of all this that I have just set down. A vague rumour of the conclusion alone made itself heard. It had so often been spread that it received no more than a limited belief. At last M. le Blanc, who had not appeared since a long time, came to the Bastille on one of the last days of the year. He was alone and saw at first Prudent, the correspondent of the Baron de Walef, who had been arrested only a little while before. I was next sent for to speak with him. He told me that I might have spared them much trouble if, when he and M. d'Argenson had spoken to me, I had rendered them an account of all that I knew of the affair of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, in which I was per-

fectly well versed; that she had herself explained it by a most accurate confession, and that I had no longer any reason for keeping the secret. I replied that it had not seemed to me that they considered me to be so well informed. In fact they had examined me but once and then but slightly.

"Moreover", added I, "if Madame la Duchesse du Maine herself has spoken, what can I say that would instruct you more perfectly? She knows her own concerns better than any one can know them. Even if she had told me that of which I am ignorant, I could add nothing to the information she has given."

"You can not deny, at least", replied he, "that you have delivered to Madame la Duchesse du Maine letters from Spain."

I answered that any letters that I might have received were for myself; that they came to me from various countries wherein Madame la Duchesse du Maine had no concerns.

"They were from the Baron de Walef", cried he, "and were delivered to you by an opera dancer."

I told him (and this was true) that I knew nothing of the profession of the person who had in fact brought me letters from the Baron de Walef, which letters were for me.

M. le Blanc replied :

“ But you know the whole affair, and you must speak or remain all your life in the Bastille. ”

“ Well, Monsieur ”, said I, “ ’tis a settlement for a young woman like myself who has no fortune. ”

“ ’Tis not ”, replied he, “ a very agreeable situation. ”

“ Nor would I choose it ”, said I, “ but I will stay here sooner than invent fictions to get out of it. ”

“ It must be admitted ”, cried he, “ that Madame la Duchesse du Maine had strange confidants. ”

“ For myself, Monsieur ”, I responded, “ I may tell you, not to trifle with you farther, that if I know nothing I can tell you nothing, and that, if anything had been confided to me, I should tell it still less. ”

He could not refrain from telling me that, although it was no affair of his, Madame la Duchesse du Maine would have been fortunate if she had confided her affairs to no one but me. He added at once that her case was concluded, and that she was about to return.

“ Then I am quite content! ” cried I.

“ And what of your concerns? ” inquired he.

" They ", replied I, " are not of enough importance to disturb me. "

" Whence comes this assurance? " he asked.
" Has some one cast your horoscope? "

" The horoscope of one born to such ill fortune as myself arranges itself ", replied I; " one knows that one will be unlucky, 'tis of no matter in what fashion. "

M. le Blanc, seeing that I would do nothing but chatter, told me that he would return with M. d'Argenson and that they would bring me written orders from Madame la Duchesse du Maine to answer everything that I was asked. I answered him that I should receive them with the greatest respect, but should not speak the more for them. In effect, one undertakes such secrets from devotion to those who confide them; but one keeps them out of respect for oneself. M. le Blanc, ill content with my replies, left me, and after that would not question me farther, however much he was urged on behalf of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, after her return, to do so, saying that it was useless; he knew that I knew what to say.

When I was released from this unsatisfactory interview, Menil came to see me. I recounted it to him. I could without indiscretion tell him as much as I had told our commissioners, and truly, despite the confidence I had in him, I had not thought

that my duty permitted me to reveal to him any of the secrets of our affair. In the transport of joy in which he heard my responses to his last questioning, he came near forgetting the circumspection in which he lived with me. I sang to him these words from an opera which was played at that time :

No, let us not mingle, on one day,
So much weakness with so much glory.

I escaped as adroitly from the difficulty with him as with M. le Blanc.

Several days afterward, 'twas the 5th of January 1720, the order arrived to set free from our Château all the household of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, valets, lackeys, floor-rubbers, every one, except M. de Malesieu and myself. The Marquis de Pompadour and the Chevalier de Menil received at the same time their *lettres de cachet* to leave the Bastille and go into exile, the latter to his home in Anjou.

He came in haste to bid me adieu. I had not expected this abrupt separation. Still less had I expected to remain almost the only one of my company in prison when all the household of Madame la Duchesse du Maine had been liberated and she herself was returned. But I hardly gave any attention to what concerned myself in this junc-

ture, I was so occupied with the departure of **Me-
nil**. He seemed to me but little moved at quitting
me. The joy of leaving our melancholy abode vis-
ibly overcame in him the regret of leaving **me**
there. I should not have felt thus had I departed
first. This difference in our sentiments which I had
often suspected, but which I had never before seen
so clearly, gave me an access of the most poignant
affliction. I had neither the leisure nor the inclin-
ation to express anything to him. He departed,
and I remained in that state of numbness wherein
the soul, too full of feeling, remains without sen-
sation.

I was roused from this lethargy to go to dine at
the governor's with the Marquis de Saint-Geniez,
the sad companion of my ill fortune. The gover-
nor was gone to the country, knowing nothing of
what was to happen on that day. We had but the
Lieutenant of the King, who was too confused at
our adventure, and at what he had to announce to
us to dare to speak a word. Never was a repast
more lugubrious than that one. When it was finished,
and I was about to ascend, according to our
custom, to take coffee in the governor's room,
the Lieutenant stopped me at the foot of the stairs
and said to me :

“ Do not ascend ; you must return to your own
room and not leave it again. ”

"Very well", replied I. And, taking Mademoiselle Rondel by the arm, I made off to my own apartment.

He paid the same compliment to Saint-Geniez, who, I believe, took it not in so good part. His commission executed, he followed me to my room. Then he recounted to me that M. le Blanc, in bringing the order to set the others at large,

had given one to confine us more closely than ever, that he had begged leave of him for us to dine that day as usual, and to permit him not to announce the change to us till after our repast. The poor Lieutenant was sensibly afflicted at this disgrace, which I regarded as a relief, enraptured since I could no longer see the one who was agreeable to me, to see no one and not to pa-



rade my sadness, fearful lest the cause of it might be discovered, and wishing still less to have it attributed to want of courage, for we feel indeed greater disgust for the weaknesses from which we are exempt than for those to which we yield. Maisonrouge distinguished not these various emotions of my soul, and believed me exceeding afflicted at this renewal of captivity at the very moment it should have ceased. He sought the reason for it and asked me what I thought of it.

" 'Tis obvious ", I said to him, " that they have pitched upon me as that poor ass in the fable who, having stolen but as much hay as would cover his tongue, was punished for the other animals who were more guilty, but stronger than he. "

We discussed the event for a long time without obtaining more light.

The governor came to my room in the evening and expressed much sympathy. He was mightily amazed, and said that he had never known an instance like the one that had just happened to me, where a prisoner, after having enjoyed a sort of freedom such as I had had, was again confined. He was still more surprised to find me neither terrified nor alarmed at such persistent misfortune. My tranquillity seemed to him worthy of admiration because he perceived not its despicable support. 'Tis thus we are often honoured

for that which, better understood, would produce the opposite effect.

The Lieutenant of the King, seeing me deprived of all company, renewed his former assiduity toward me. He told me two days after the departure of the Chevalier de Menil that he had received a billet from him filled with fond expressions for me. He wished to shew it to me and could not find it. I knew him too well to suspect him of any dissembling. The following day I received one directly addressed to me, with which I was ill content.

I was some days without hearing from the Chevalier de Menil. I employed them in making a thousand disturbing remarks and reflections upon my behaviour. I persuaded myself that the free air had dissipated in one moment the sentiments I had believed so steadfast; I experienced the most bitter grief. At length the Lieutenant told me that he had been to see him and had entreated him to deliver a letter to me and engage me to answer it. I received yet another, unknown to the Lieutenant, before his departure, through his valet, in which he informed me he had had a long conversation with a friend of his greatly attached to our court; that he had confided to him his engagements to me and his designs, in the belief that it would be well to interest him in us

and dispose him to serve us with respect to the princess. I was extremely content with this step which gave me testimony of the honesty of his intentions and his eagerness to put them into execution. I was greatly afflicted not to have the means of hearing news of him or of giving him news of me. He departed and we durst risk nothing through the post. Our incomparable friend came again to our rescue. He knew the grief and uneasiness that this privation occasioned me, and said to me :

“ You cannot write to the Chevalier de Menil nor he to you in the situation you are in. Everything would be lost if your writing were seen at the post; but I shall write to him every week. You shall see my letters and his replies, which will keep you each informed of what concerns the other. ”

I was sensible of the full merit of this last service. The appearance of a connection with one who had just escaped from under his guardianship might cause his fidelity to be suspected. But nothing was capable of hindering him when there was question of my satisfaction.

During the last days of the year they sent the chariots of Madame la Duchesse du Maine to fetch her at Chanlay ; La Billarderie, who was carrying the orders of the Court to her, was to meet

them on the way and precede them. M. de Saily, an equerry of this princess, who was to escort them, took the post when half way and arrived at Joigny, a little village two leagues from Chanlay, there to await the passage of M. de La Billarderie and to betake himself, at the same time, to Madame la Duchesse du Maine. He remained there two days without wishing to make himself known. The cooks of the royal kitchen in service about the princess went every day to that place to buy their provisions : seeing a man who, by the questions he asked them, seemed to take an interest in her, they acquainted her with the fact. She charged them to discover who he was, he durst not refuse to inform them. As soon as she knew him, she sent him word to wait upon her. Although he feared he might be overstepping the orders he had received, he obeyed her. He solicited M. Desangles, the king's lieutenant of the citadel of Châlon, who had followed Madame la Duchesse du Maine to Chanlay and guarded her there, for permission to go thither. He sent him word that he might do so, but that he would like to converse with him before he waited upon the princess. He addressed himself therefore first to Desangles, who recommended him vaguely to say nothing but what was conformable with the prudence requisite in the present state of affairs.

After this he saw Her Highness. She was delighted to see in him a signal for her release, but this joy was clouded by the delay of La Billarderie, the reasons for which she could not surmise.

They had promised her that, on arriving at Sceaux, she should there find the Duc du Maine, her sons, the princes, and the princess her daughter. When La Billarderie was in readiness to depart to fetch her, he learned through Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans that M. le Duc du Maine had requested to go to Clagny near Versailles, and not to Sceaux, whither he had also ordered that his children should not go.

La Billarderie, foreseeing that Madame la Duchesse du Maine would be in despair at this change, wished not to fetch her till he had set everything in motion to prevail upon M. le Duc du Maine to do as she desired. This negotiation delayed his journey for several days. Unable to accomplish anything, he at length set out, firmly resolved to conceal this vexatious news from her, for fear she might persist in remaining where she was if she received no satisfaction on that point.

Her uneasiness at not seeing him arrive increased with each moment that passed after she had counted upon his being at Chanlay. She asked Saily a thousand questions in order to discover

the cause of this delay. He knew the resolution which M. le Duc du Maine had taken of not returning with her; he took great care to say nothing of it to her; but his embarrassment when she discoursed to him of the joy she would feel on seeing Sceaux again and the prince and her children had like to have betrayed him. She perceived it and demanded the reason. He dissipated her fear with a sufficiently ingenious turn. At length La Billarderie arrived and she was entirely reassured, for he said nothing to her but what was conformable to her desires, having taken the resolution of not apprising her of the true state of affairs till they arrived at Petit-Bourg, which was the last stage. M. d'Antin, who was to be there, was charged with this commission. She set out, and La Billarderie took every precaution to prevent her hearing of the accident before the time appointed, to the end that nothing might delay her return, or disturb the order of her progress. Despite the care they had taken with this in view to hinder any one from speaking to her along her route, a concierge at Fontainebleau put her in the way of discovering the mystery by telling her that M. le Duc du Maine was gone to Clagny. She was seized with astonishment and grief at this news, which she desired explained at once. La Billarderie was obliged to tell her the

truth, which he brought himself to do the more willingly as she was too far advanced to turn back.

When she learned that this residence of M. le Duc du Maine at Clagny was of his own seeking, she was the more afflicted. This disposition on the part of the prince seemed to presage new misfortunes for her. However she continued her route, and arrived at Petit-Bourg, where Madame de Chambonnas, her gentlewoman-in-waiting, joined her. She conversed with M. d'Antin of the present circumstances, and he led her to expect that so soon as she was on the premises everything would be arranged to her liking.

She arrived at Sceaux and found no one. She learned that no one might come there but with the express permission of Madame la Princesse, who believed that she should give it to but few. She was informed that the Duc d'Orleans had read before the full Council of the Regency the document which he had promised her to keep secret. Although it had been ill read, scarce heard, still less understood, it had none the less been judged and condemned. The public, who had not seen it and never saw it, were indignant, and censured Madame la Duchesse du Maine, without knowing that she had been led into error by the very persons whom she should least have dis-

trusted, and without examining the motives that had determined her to the course she had adopted. It was supposed that she had betrayed the persons who had been devoted to her, though she brought none of them into trouble, and, to say the truth, she had rather, for their safety, have delivered over herself to the condemnation of the world, easily foretold on so delicate an occasion.

The Abbé de Maulevrier, hearing the public clamour and being concerned only to save Madame la Princesse and himself from the suspicion of having participated in the proceeding, cried out louder than any one against Madame la Duchesse du Maine, and engaged Madame la Princesse to disown her entirely. He accused her of having sacrificed the Cardinal de Polignac and Mallesieu, whose defence he had thought, but a short time before, she had undertaken too warmly. La Billarderie wished to remind him of this, and of all that he had said and written to Madame la Duchesse du Maine of an opposite nature to what he was then saying. He denied it, either because he had forgotten it, or because he preferred the present interest to the truth, of which he believed there was no proof. He came to see Madame la Duchesse du Maine at Sceaux and testified to her, without any consideration, the disapprobation he

felt at the course she had taken. She remained at first as one petrified with astonishment. She was abed and had beneath her pillow all his letters and those of Madame la Princesse. 'Twas easy to confound him. She was tempted to do so and had the courage to resist, seeing, in the situation she was in, the danger of irritating a man who possessed the entire confidence of Madame la Princesse, her only remaining support, and who might alienate her from her mother if she pushed him to extremities. She foresaw also that, if he knew that she had preserved the letters in question, he would engage Madame la Princesse to exact that she should give them up, which she could not refuse to do without quarrelling with her, nor return without depriving herself forever of proofs that justified her conduct.

A few days afterward, Madame la Duchesse du Maine demanded and obtained permission to go to see Madame la Princesse, who was indisposed and could not come to Sceaux. She was well received. Madame la Princesse forbore to utter reproaches which might have recoiled upon herself, and Madame la Duchesse du Maine only discoursed to her of the necessity of urging the fulfilment of the Regent's promises for the liberation of the prisoners, and of using her efforts to reunite her with M. le Duc du Maine.

This prince, vexed at having undergone for a whole year a harsh captivity on account of an affair in which he had taken no part, designed to remain at Clagny and not to see Madame la Duchesse du Maine. He had been persuaded that his display of resentment toward her would be an obvious proof of his own innocence, which he had great interest to establish in order to force the Regent to restore to him the exercise of his office and his rank, from which he had been degraded at the Bed-of-Justice preceding his imprisonment. Besides, he was angry at the derangement of his business and the expenses that had been entailed; he intended to fix a sum for the maintenance of the household of Madame la Duchesse du Maine and to make arrangements to pay his debts and take measures that no fresh ones should be contracted.

This plan of separation afflicted Madame la Duchesse du Maine more than the censure of the public and the desertion of the greater number of the persons who, in her prosperity, had seemed greatly attached to her. She brought every effort to bear to effect a reconciliation with the Duc du Maine; but 'twas a long negotiation. I will relate the outcome of it in its place. In order not to disturb the sequence of events, I have here recorded what I knew not till after I was at liberty.

While this was happening and I was absorbed in my reflections alone in my room, which I no longer quitted, I saw a turnkey enter who was not the one who usually attended me. He gave me a large packet, said to me that he would return to fetch it and went away with all speed. I opened it eagerly and found therein a letter from Madame la Duchesse du Maine and her confession. She informed me that she had sent me this production to the end that I might make what I had to say conform to it, though she left me entire liberty. This letter was written in her hand. I burned that part relating to business and I preserved the last lines, which I here transcribe :

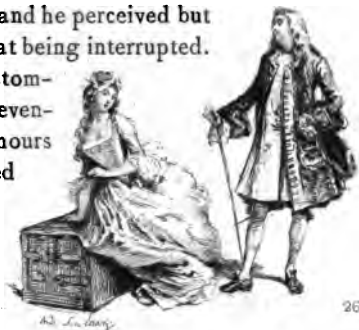
I love you and esteem you more than ever, and all that you have done has not surprised me in the least. Your understanding and fidelity were known to me. You shall receive marks of my friendship such as you merit as soon as I have the pleasure of seeing you.

Adieu, my dear Launay.

I was extremely affected by this letter and the pleasure of seeing the hand of my princess. After having read it carefully, I began the persual of the production accompanying it. In the midst of this reading the Lieutenant of the King arrived unexpect-

tedly. I threw quickly the papers I was holding into a trunk, and he perceived but my vexation at being interrupted.

He was accustomed to the unevenness of my humours and respected them. He remained not long with me, and I re-



sumed my reading; but, upon Rondel's making me perceive the risk I ran of being surprised during the day, I postponed it till the night. The document was of prodigious length, and I employed two ere I had finished it. I wrote a letter to Madame la Duchesse du Maine (I am reminded no longer of what it contained) and resealed the packet. I had been directed to make a signal opposite the tower where M. de Malesieu was confined when I had done, that some one might come to fetch it. This I did. The same document had first been conveyed to him with the order to communicate it to me. 'Twas more necessary for him to be made privy to it than for me. I was named therein but casually in connection with an unimportant fact concerning the woman

Dupuis, of whom I have spoken elsewhere; but everything relating to Malesieu was set forth at large in order to exculpate him as far as possible by publishing the representations which Madame la Duchesse du Maine declared that he had made to her, and the authority she had used toward him to obtain from him a portion of the document which had been found. The postponement of his liberation distressed the princess. She so earnestly solicited the Regent to release him from prison that she achieved it not above three weeks after her return; but she could not save him from exile. He was sent to Étampes, where he remained six months.

She also petitioned the Regent on the Comte de Laval's account and mine. He told her we were both suspected of having participated in the affair in Brittany, with which he was then greatly occupied, and that this must be cleared up before he released us. She protested that with regard to me such could not be the case, that I had never done anything and could do nothing save by her orders, and that he was sure she had had no part in that affair. 'Tis true that the Baron de Walef, finding himself idle and ill at ease, had entered into the intrigue from which he imagined he might gain advantage. He had had some correspondence with the insurgent Bretons and had employed the same

woman whom he had put in relation with me; hence they concluded that I might be privy to the transmission of news to which she lent herself. They were so convinced of this, although 'twas absolutely false, that they contemplated transferring me to the Château de Nantes. I was warned of this and I was the more alarmed, because some days before they had carried off in the night the Comte de Noyon from the Bastille to this Château, and so hastily that he had had no time to take any of his things with him. I pictured myself thus destitute, posting along the highways and arriving at a strange jail where the jailors might be much more rough than those I had tamed. I never had but the apprehension of this experience; they learned without carrying me further that I had not meddled in the affair in Brittany.

The Regent then, to evade releasing me from prison, held to the position that I must confess as the others had done; that he had imposed this condition and that he would not have it set aside by the ridiculous heroism upon which I piqued myself. M. de Torpanne was deputed to persuade me to this submission; he was known to me from his employment in the household of M. le Duc du Maine. It was thought that I should not mistrust him. He had permission to enter my chamber, where I had never hitherto beheld a person from without. He

told me that he came on behalf of Madame la Duchesse du Maine to release me from all the oaths I had sworn her to keep her secrets; that she had been obliged to reveal them herself, and that she acquitted me of all obligation in that matter. I replied that I had taken no oaths, that I knew not of what he was talking; that her Serene Highness was free to render account of her own affairs; that she could do so much better than I who knew them so little, and that I remembered not enough of what I might have known to say anything. He departed before I could say anything farther.

On this occasion and on others of a like nature, Mademoiselle Rondel, with a resolution above her station, exhorted me not to allow myself to be suborned by the inducements employed to make me speak.

"The attitude you have maintained until now", said she to me, "does you honour; trust me, do not belie it. What can happen to you? The affair is at an end. You have nothing to fear but to remain here a little longer. What matters it? Are we not entirely accustomed to it?"

I have always marvelled that a servant, on whom reflects none of the honour of his master, should have been so scrupulous of it, and have sacrificed his own liberty to it so willingly.

Shortly after this visit of Torpanne, our gov-

ernor came to tell me on behalf of M. le Blanc that he demanded a confession of me. I told him that I knew not what a confession was; that I had never seen one but in romances; that apparently that was not what M. le Blanc demanded of me; that I would write to him to learn more precisely what it was he required of me; that I begged him to be so obliging as to burden himself with my letter. I gave him the next day the one which follows :

Monsieur,

M. the Governor of the Bastille yesterday commanded me on your behalf to write a confession. As I am ignorant of what it should treat, I am unable, despite the desire I have to obey you, to satisfy your demand, unless you will have the goodness to indicate to me the matters of which you are desirous I should render you an account.

If my ignorance of the faults which I may have committed suffices not to vindicate me, at least it deprives me of all power to avow them. M. de Torpanne, whom I have seen by your permission, has told me that Madame la Duchesse du Maine has given the fullest explanation of the matters which concern her. If there are any upon which you desire enlightenment on my part, do me the kindness to point

them out, Monsieur. I shall have the honour to answer you with all the accuracy which the respect due to the truth and the persons who demand it exacts of me.

I have the honour to be, etc.

This 20th of April 1720.

These manœuvres made me believe my departure at hand. As it seemed likely that the Regent would not consent that I should return at once to the service of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, and as I knew moreover that Madame la Princesse would oppose it, I thought of securing for myself a retreat of which I might at any moment stand in need.

The taste I had acquired for solitude during my enforced retirement, the unhappy life I had led in the world, made me contemplate with pleasure the seclusion of a convent. It was indeed my native land, and I have always desired to return to it. I longed especially to go to the Presentation, where Madame de Grieu still was, and where I had made my first settlement on leaving the country. I communicated my scheme to Maison-rouge. He prevailed upon the Marquise du Châtelet, to whom he was strongly attached, to write on the subject to her sister, Madame de Riche-

lieu, abbess of the Presentation, who thus replied to her :

Although I never take grandes pensionnaires, my dear sister, I have nevertheless wished to arrange that Mademoiselle de Launay should be entrusted to me. But this step is regarded in these times as unprofitable for her and dangerous for me. Judge if I would not receive her in case she should leave the Bastille. I shall be induced thereto by more than one motive, and one of the most powerful will be the interest that your obliging major takes in it. He has taken the most zealous care for love of you. He has finished by doing so on his own account. It is right to receive her at his hands. I even desire that he should be grateful to me for doing so, as I am to him, inexpressibly, for all that he has done. You are right, my dear sister, in appreciating his zeal and assiduity toward our brother. I too am very sensible of it. Convey to him my thanks and present a million compliments to him from me.

I had information, soon after this little negotiation, that Madame la Duchesse du Maine insisted strongly upon having me again about her as soon as I quitted prison, and my projects became most uncertain; the most interesting de

pended on the return and inclinations of the Chevalier de Menil. Maisonrouge, true to his word, wrote to him every week, and received letters from him as often, which he did not omit to impart to me, as likewise his own. The one and the other were very circumspect out of regard for the risk they ran of having their letters intercepted.

He had spent three months and a half in exile when he announced to us his return. He followed this intimation closely. As soon as he was arrived, he came to see our Lieutenant, asked him many questions concerning me and begged him to convey to me a letter with which I was little content. It ran principally on the necessity of setting me free from prison. His style seemed to me changed. I suspected that his sentiments and his intentions had suffered a like change. What Maisonrouge reported to me of his conversation, that which I saw he suppressed of it, the dejected air he had in giving me the account, all tended to alarm me. Then I reassured myself with the same things which had given birth to my uneasiness. Would the sadness of a rival announce the infidelity of the one who was preferred to him? Would he not rather be filled with a joy which he could not dissemble? It was the certainty of his own misfortune, not mine, which afflicted him.

This is what I said to calm myself; and a thousand other replies revived my agitation.

He wrote me many letters during the remainder of my captivity which nearly all kept me in a state of uncertainty and trouble which I hid from him as far as possible in my responses.

Madame la Duchesse du Maine, who had toiled for my deliverance during the five months following her return, besought Madame la Princesse de Conti, her niece, from whom she received many marks of friendship, to prevail upon M. le Blanc to see me for the last time, and to wind up my affair. This Princess spoke to him and could not obtain anything from him but permission to send me M. Bochet, secretary of the Command of the Prince de Conti, charged with the orders of Madame la Duchesse du Maine. She was not willing to put them into her own writing. She chose a person who was known to me and not under suspicion, and made her write on a card which I have kept : " Madame la Duchesse du Maine commands you to write, and I am charged to say so in her behalf. "

M. Bochet came to the Bastille, presented this card to me, made me comprehend that a longer resistance on my part would be taken ill on all sides, and that I must yield to this last order. I wrote then, but without pretending to sincerity, and I told

but matters which they did not care to know and those which they had no desire to hear. I added to this document a letter which I wrote to M. le Blanc. Here are both the one and the other :

CONFESSION

The Baron de Walef, who came often to Madame la Duchesse du Maine after she lived in the Tuileries, and who from time to time brought to me poetical effusions of his own making which he wished me to shew to Madame la Duchesse du Maine, told me one day that he contemplated a journey into Spain with the intent to revive, if it were possible, some ancient rights to a succession in that country which had formerly escheated to him; that he would afterward go into Italy, where he had some other business; that he would fain not depart without taking leave of Madame la Duchesse du Maine and receiving her commands. A little time after, Madame la Duchesse du Maine told me that the Baron de Walef had spoken to her of his journey and had asked her if she did not wish to charge him with some commission; that she had replied that, if he heard any particular news in the places to which he went, she would be well pleased that he should impart it to her; that he had but to write to me in order that she might see what

he communicated to me. He came to see me and told me the same thing, adding that he had in this country a friend, whom he named not, who would convey to me his letters. At length he admitted to me that he was in the greatest embarrassment, that the money upon which he had counted to make his journey had miscarried; that, if he could not recover it, he would lose the most favourable juncture for his claims; that he saw no other shift but to part with a tea service of very rare china which he possessed; that he begged me to ascertain if Madame la Duchesse du Maine would not purchase it. He brought it to me the very next day to shew to her. She understood his design perfectly, and, not thinking she could decently refuse some aid to a man of condition who was so much attached to her and had made her aware of the need in which he stood, she made him carry back his tea service and gave him a hundred louis. He departed and was a long time without giving us of his news. At length he wrote a letter from Rome of which the date surprised Madame la Duchesse du Maine, who knew not that he was going there; afterward several others from Madrid. They were all delivered to me by a girl or woman whom I knew not. She told me she was a friend of the Baron de Walef, and that her name was Prudent. I have never mentioned her to Madame la Duchesse du Maine, the occasion for so doing not

having presented itself; and I had no particular conversation with the person aforesaid. I simply contented myself with thanking her for the trouble she took in conveying to me the letters I speak of. I do not remember in the least what they contained. I have merely some idea of a memoir which the Baron de Walef fabricated for Cardinal Alberoni according to the extract from it which was in one of his letters. It was a tissue of fantastic matters so confusedly set forth that one could make nothing of it, still less give any account of it. Madame la Duchesse du Maine fell into a veritable fit of rage and said to me that, if this man were going to involve her in his extravagances, there would be a pretty ado; that I must send word to him forthwith to keep quiet and in no way meddle with matters that did not concern him. The letter was writ in sufficiently brisk terms to make him feel how much his false step had been disapproved. Nevertheless it produced yet more idle fancies upon which I remember that Madame la Duchesse du Maine exclaimed: "He is gone stark mad, which is", added she, "a calamity so common among men who meddle with verse-making that I ought to have foreseen it and not have suffered such a man to vaunt himself of my acquaintance." Fearing then the effects of his insane enthusiasm, she decided that there was nothing better to be done than to suggest to him to return, promising him, as she knew he was

seeking his fortune, to contrive some place to suit him in this country. He wrote that he would return willingly, seeing no sign of the termination of the business which had called him into Spain; but that he had not a sou to make the journey and that he knew not either how he should subsist; that he was fain, being unable to return lacking means, to find employment on the spot.

My ill health then having prevented me from following Madame la Duchesse du Maine on a journey which she made to Sceaux, I was for some time separated from her. On her return she told me that she had taken measures such as she thought needful to prevent attention being paid to anything that might come from the Baron de Walef; that she had, besides, found means to request some employment for him in Spain, in case he was not willing to return; that she surmised that this would calm his fervour, and that he would no more think of intermeddling unless he was asked; that I must give him notice of this and send him word to write no more, as his correspondence gave nothing but dissatisfaction. And there was no farther question of him.

I had cognizance also of another matter which perchance does not merit chronicling; but, be that as it may, here it is :

The Abbé le Camus having told Madame la Duchesse du Maine that one Abbé de Vêrac was the

author of a certain lampoon which went abroad on the quarrel of the Princes, she wished to have proof of it in order to dissipate the opinion which was held that this writing proceeded from her house. I was charged on this occasion to see a woman named Dupuis, a friend of these two abbés, from whom it was averred I could obtain the knowledge and proofs of the fact in question. I throve but ill in my commission. The woman Dupuis told me nothing. I was obliged to see her again, but I learned no more. Nevertheless she took occasion to come often to Madame la Duchesse du Maine under pretext of having to speak with me; and all her discourse reduced itself to offers of services on behalf of the Abbé de Vêrac to Madame la Duchesse du Maine in case she should wish to have anything written. I repeated to her many times that, all her business being at an end, there was no farther need of writing. She returned to her charge and told me that, if Madame la Duchesse du Maine would but see the Abbé de Vêrac, she would be mightily content with him, and that he could tell her of matters which she would be well pleased to hear. I reported this proposition, which she dunned into me, to Madame la Duchesse du Maine. She refused to see the Abbé de Vêrac, and, conceiving suspicions of this uncalled for eagerness, ordered me to tell the woman Dupuis to come no more. She was not easy to rebuff; despite this she came again on divers pretexts, saying

that she had important information to give which she could not divulge save to me. In fine I procured her the opportunity of seeing *Madame la Duchesse du Maine* for a moment, to whom she said a few words which modified in no way the suspicions she had of this woman.

These are the only matters in which I had any share and of which I am informed. In addition to this I perceived that *Madame la Duchesse du Maine* was restless and that she was involved in some affair of which I never knew the details. I have only remarked the extreme dread she had lest *M. le Duc du Maine* should have the least knowledge of it.

This 1st of February, 1720.

LETTER

Monseigneur,

Your repeated orders seemed to me too imperative for me longer to defer executing them. Here then is a precise narrative of what I know, either concerning the matters on which you have taken the trouble to speak to me, or those which have presented themselves to my memory. It has perchance neither the form nor style of a confession, of which truly I know nothing. But at the least, *Monseigneur*, you

will recognize in it my sincerity and my submission to your orders. If I have neglected to obey them when they were first expressed to me, I have been sufficiently punished by the fear of bringing down upon myself your wrath, more grievous, in my opinion, than all my other ills.

I have the honour to be, etc.

I imagined that the Regent would not be well pleased with this document, but, since he desired but the apparent fulfillment of the condition imposed to secure our liberation, he contented himself with it and made no mention of it, so that it was never publicly known that I had given any writing.

Some days afterward, being at my window, I saw the Lieutenant of the King crossing the court with all speed, holding a paper which he waved to me. He entered my room with a vehemence which astonished me. None but a painter, who could unite to an expression of joy one of keen suffering, could fitly render that which I observed in him as he presented me with the paper he held; it was my order of release from the Bastille.

“ You are free ”, cried he, “ and I lose you. I have ardently desired this moment; I would have given my life to have brought it about

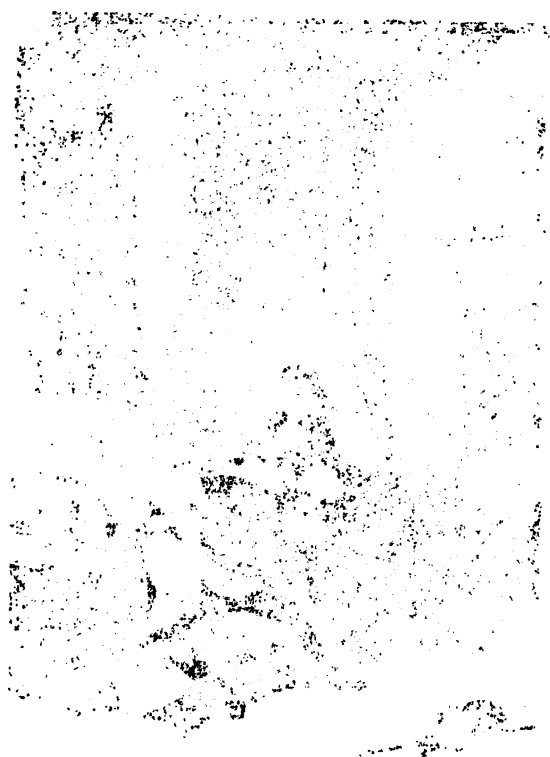
sooner. But I shall cease to see you. What will become of me? ”

I felt but confused emotions; joy, if one of them, did not make itself conspicuous. I regretted a friend capable of an attachment which I saw was but too rare. I wished to see the Chevalier de Menil again and clear up my suspicions, and mayhap I feared it no less. To conclude, I desired to find myself once more near Madame la Duchesse du Maine, and yet was terrified at the annoyances and fatigues into which I should again be plunged. All my emotions were held in suspense by the almost equal force of contradictory sentiments.





I RECEIVED, with my liberty, an order to repair at once to Sceaux, where Madame la Duchesse du Maine was. I sent to the Temple to beg the Abbé de Chaulieu to send me his coach to carry me to him and afterward to Sceaux; he was at that time very ill of the complaint whereof he died three weeks after. I saw him and remarked how in his condition that which is useless to us becomes indifferent. He had greatly commiserated my captivity, but he did not seem to me in the least moved at my deliverance. I felt keenly the loss I should sustain in a friend who seemed

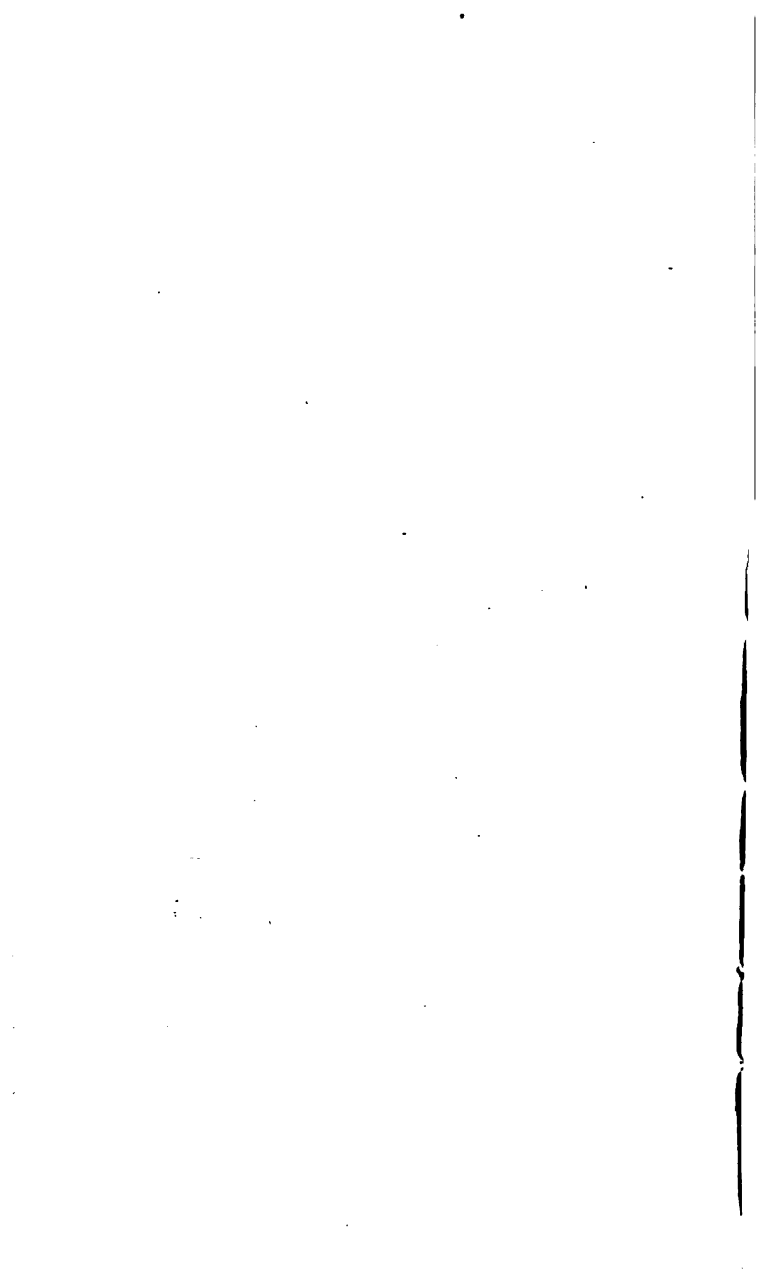




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M. DACIER'S SEIZURE.



to be charged with the care of filling my life with as much pleasure as it could hold; in fine I was still concerned for that which was useful to me, for no one else ever undertook that amiable office for me. I could not remain with the Abbé as long as I could have wished. I needs must depart without tarrying anywhere.

I arrived in Sceaux in the evening. Madame la Duchesse du Maine was taking an airing. I went to meet her in the garden; she saw me, stopped her chaise and cried :

“ Ah! here is Mademoiselle de Launay; I am mightily content to see you again. ”

I drew near; she embraced me and pursued her way. I reentered the house; I was led to the chamber prepared for me. I was in raptures to find a window and a fireplace, and to hear that there were two new waiting women : one to replace the former who was dead, and the other to occupy my place from which I was removed. Madame la Duchesse du Maine had sent me word that she desired for wardrobe woman Mademoiselle Rondel, of whom much good had been repeated to her. Hers had died in prison. I gave her up readily, in the hope that it might lead to something better for her, and took a young sister she had. They were both waiting women to Her Highness for twenty years after.

There was almost nobody at Sceaux when I returned. The Duchesse d'Estrées repaired thither as soon as she could obtain permission. Madame la Duchesse du Maine had the liberty of seeing but very few people. She played at *biribi* with the people of her household nearly all night long, and slept the greater part of the day. I was made to watch and read as formerly. I was entirely unaccustomed to this, and these tedious proceedings made me greatly regret the repose of my prison. Madame la Duchesse du Maine discoursed to me of hers, apprised me of all that had happened to her which till then I knew not, speaking much to me and questioning little. She shewed me the letters of Madame la Princesse and those of the Abbé de Maulevrier whereof I have spoken above. I received the following one from poor Maison-rouge the very day after I had quitted him :

The 7th of June.

Judge, my very dear ward ('tis a title I desire you will wish to preserve); judge, I say, of my situation. I waver between joy and grief. You know with what earnestness I have desired your freedom. At length it has been given to you; well and good; I would have purchased it with my own. But in fine

it has already cost me that and I foresaw that it would cost me as much. 'Tis without art or guile that I expose myself just as I am to you. My sincerity and the integrity of my heart are known to you. I take no pains to justify my various caprices. I have ardently desired to lose you; I have lost you. I am in despair at it. Whatever reflections I may make on my whimsicality, I cannot absolutely condemn it; excuse it, my dear and worthy friend. I shall love you always with all the tenderness of my heart. I shall take an infinity of interest all my life in all the happiness which comes to you. Your virtue, your courage, have taken me captive entirely. Many other amiable traits which I have seen near at hand make me unceasingly regret my sad fate, but make me always remember that one who has loved you should never cease to love you. Above all take great care of your health. Yesterday's work has not affected mine too well. The various emotions by which I was agitated have produced a reverse which did not cause me to pass too good a night. Great care is taken of your cat.

Two days later I begged leave to make a journey to Paris to fetch the various things which I had left at the Bastille, as I had taken with me only what was most necessary. I was extremely impatient to see my true friends again and chiefly

to converse with the Chevalier de Menil, whom I informed of my trip in this billet :

At length I shall converse with you, should nothing happen to interfere. I expect to be at the Presentation on Monday morning, and there we can discuss the various things of which my mind and heart are full. In the meanwhile, as nothing is certain, I shall tell you what may be told and not what I think of my present situation, for you might fancy me out of my wits. 'Tis likely the effect of the watches without interruption which I have held since I have been here. But, whatever it may be, I have never been in a more melancholy disposition; and, if I receive not from some outside source the satisfaction which fails me, I fear lest I may at length fail myself.

The day after the morrow I was with Madame de Grieu at the Presentation; she had like to have died of joy on seeing me again. I found in her parlour the Chevalier de Menil, who, far from a similar transport, displayed but an embarrassed mien. I myself was petrified at his countenance, from which I augured his entire change.

He discoursed to me of the unfortunate state of his affairs, caused by the general disorder he had involved himself in by selling a house which

he had, and which I saw he had disposed of unnecessarily for the sake of an annuity. His relish for this sort of property indicated clearly that he never had any intention but of living for himself alone. The veil, more or less thick, which had covered my eyes till then, fell; and I saw the chasm into which I had plunged, in engaging myself on such unsubstantial grounds. To leave my illusions no further hold over me, I asked him what had become of his former projects. He said to me that he desired their execution as much as ever, that he was far from giving them up, but that they must be suspended to see what turn his affairs might take; that while waiting he should take the journey he had spoken of to me in his letters. (There was question of his going to see the Marquise d'Avaray, an old and intimate friend of his and wife of the ambassador to Switzerland.) Nothing seemed to him more essential. Whatever desire he had to see her, he had a greater one to separate himself from me. But, repulsed as I was by him, I hoped not to return without conversing with him again. I told him that I should be in Paris for two days with Madame de Réal, the niece of Madame de Grieu and my most intimate friend; that he would find me there on the day following after dinner if he wished to come.

I went afterward to see my friends, from whom

I probably received a warmer welcome. But no recollection of it whatever remains to me, grief had so deeply penetrated my soul as to render it incapable of all other impression. I went to the Bastille : that was the object of my journey ; I there saw the Lieutenant of the King ; I found him depressed and ill. I have lost all notion of what we said to one another. I know not, indeed ; if we had any particular conversation. I recall only that I gave him the little essay I had sketched during my imprisonment, which he had craved with instance. I had added to it the following dedicatory epistle :

Since it is to you, Monsieur, that I owe the liberty of thought which I have enjoyed during my captivity, it is but right that the fruits which it produced should be dedicated to you. They are so mediocre in value, and so small in quantity, that I scarce dare present my offering, which consists in a few reflections of no great profundity, and all of which together attain by no means to the end I proposed to myself in this work, of which this is but a small fragment. I cannot offer in excuse either haste or want of leisure. Sloth and indolence, which are born and wax strong in solitude, are the sole causes of the brevity and imperfection of this composition.

If you will deign to receive it as a proof of my confidence and of the gratitude I owe you for all the favours you have conferred upon me, you will bestow yet one more which, together with the others, I will preserve forever in my memory.

I know not what I did the rest of that day. Upon the day following I received a visit from M. de Silly at the house of Madame de Réal. He expressed great pleasure at seeing me again and high commendation of my behaviour. I went abroad again and returned early. Madame de Réal was gone to the Opera. I had not wished to accompany her, neither that she should stop at home to keep me company. I promised myself an occupation of more interest. I awaited therefore, and I awaited without end, the Chevalier de Menil, who never came. 'Twas chiefly the impression of this cruel evening which effaced from my memory everything that preceded or followed it. I have never passed any time in my life to be compared to that. I saw the infidelity of Menil affirmed; I saw that he even dispensed with all appearance of integrity and decorum toward me; and what filled the measure of my despair was that I saw at the same time I could not sever myself from him despite his perfidy.

Madame de Réal returned and found me in such a condition as she had never seen me in, though we had passed our lives together in the greatest intimacy. She wished to know what had occasioned me so violent an affliction. I avowed the reason of it and related to her the whole adventure. I found some consolation in unbosoming myself to so tender and loyal a soul. I had almost brought her up and I regarded her as my daughter. She was an extremely amiable woman, exempt from all pretention, gentle, sensible, possessed of much wit without knowing it, and of charm without seeking to please.

Although the interview I had with her relieved me somewhat, I passed the night in an agitation which no instant of sleep composed. As soon as day broke I wrote to the Chevalier de Menil.

He came to Madame de Réal's before my departure. He had not failed on the previous day but through a misunderstanding. He had been told at the door that I was not at home. He had not indeed that error to answer for, but he had so many others that I was scarce more content with him, as I shewed him in my letters after my return to Sceaux.

I received one at this juncture from Madame de Vauvray, which stated that the little time I had had to think of my toilette, or to acquaint myself

with the fashions, authorized the liberty she took in sending me a pattern. This letter was accompanied by a box containing the dress of a woman from her head to her feet and everything that could appertain to her



costume; the whole in the best taste in the world. I was touched by so kind an attention in a juncture which made it seemly. All the clothes I had had in prison were worn out by the lapse of time, and I came out of it in rags, as the phrase is. I was therefore freshly attired through the kindness of a friend whose generosity I have not been able to recompense but by the memory I have preserved of it.

I enjoyed a small triumph after my release from prison. The small part I had played in an affair which had made so much commotion lent me a sort of lustre. The propriety of my behaviour secured me more approbation than in reality I merited, the little that it cost me being considered. But our actions cannot be appreciated by their

intrinsic worth, which is unknown; the circumstance which brings them to light decides their value. My old friends, flattered by my success, renewed their interest in me. Many people who did not know me wished to make my acquaintance; and I should have enjoyed many pleasures if the miserable poison with which my soul was surfeited had not rendered it impervious to all gratification.

However, Madame la Duchesse du Maine was still in great trouble, and it was easier for me to share this than it would have been her amusements. Many persons were estranged from her for fear of displeasing the Regent, with whom, despite her apparent reconciliation, they did not believe her to be on good terms. She saw little company. The Cardinal de Polignac and Malesieu were still in exile. But what afflicted her more than all else was that M. le Duc du Maine persisted in remaining at Clagny and would not see her. He made a proposal to her to fix a sum for the maintenance of her household, of which she should undertake the administration herself. These plans for a separation were odious to her, and she would listen to nothing which tended to that end. On the contrary, she brought everything to bear to reunite him to her, prevailed upon Madame la Princesse to speak to him, and all the

persons who had access to him, even Madame de Chambonnas, whom she drilled so well in her lesson that she talked marvellously well. Finally she employed the Cardinal de Noailles to attack his conscience. M. le Duc du Maine, thus urged on all sides, could not at least refuse an interview, which took place in the house of Landais, secretary general of artillery, at Vaugirard. The Prince betook himself thither and Madame la Princesse conducted the Duchesse du Maine. She made every effort on her part to be obliging, but this did not produce all the effect on the disposition of M. le Duc du Maine that she had anticipated. If he had felt but a veritable displeasure, his resistance would not have been so long; but a concerted resentment could only be conquered by reasons which persuaded him that it was useless. This was what they made him see in the end, and he yielded.

He came consequently to Sceaux and lived there about as usual, ever occupied, however, with the retrenchments that he had to make. 'Twas in this mind that he would not have Malesieu on the expiration of his exile return to him. He remained, therefore, with his family at Chatenay, a separate estate from the barony of Sceaux, which M. le Duc had given to him and his posterity in fee simple. Madame la Duchesse du Maine suffered this absence with impatience, and indemnified

herself for it only by a perpetual commerce by letter.

Madame de Malesieu, his wife, had followed him into exile and had remained with him since his return. She was governess to Mademoiselle du Maine, who had been left at the convent of Chailot till the old order of things should be reestablished.

The Cardinal de Polignac, in his Abbey of Anchin, not less frightened than the Duc du Maine, dared not have the slightest relation with Madame la Duchesse du Maine. She, however, was extremely eager to justify her conduct to him. She profited by the opportunity of a journey which the son of Madame de Chambonnas made to Flanders, to write to him and send him a copy of her confession. He was fearful of casting his eyes upon the papers and gave them to his confidential man, who assured him that he might read them without danger. Although he must have seen, by the examination of this document, the care that Madame la Duchesse du Maine had taken to palliate everything relating to him, and have been grateful to her for it, he persisted out of a vain fright in having no commerce with her, and paid her but a simple visit of form on his return. Punishment had rendered him so circumspect that he would not even attend the marriage of the Marquis

de Chambonnas with Mademoiselle de Ligne, to which as a relative he was invited, because it took place at the Arsenal at the house of Madame la Duchesse du Maine and she was to be there.

Some time after, the death of the pope having called him to Rome, he came to take leave of her and seemed to be reconciled. He assured her, on quitting her, that she should hear from him often, that he would resume on his return the character of a true friend, and that he had only suspended his good offices in order not to give umbrage to the Regent. Despite these kind remarks, his fear remained too strong for him and we heard never a word more of him.

However, Madame la Duchesse du Maine regained little by little her full liberty. The persons estranged from her, either of their own seeking or perforce, became reconciled. Malesieu returned to Sceaux. She saw company without restriction, went to Paris when it pleased her, resided there as long as she wished. M. le Duc du Maine was restored to the exercise of his offices, and no trace of their misfortunes remained but his degradation in rank and that of his children. He was not reinstated until under the ministry of Cardinal de Fleury. While waiting till I reach this period, if ever I get so far, I will resume the thread of what relates to me.

I lost my mother a short time after my release from prison. She had been for a great while in a convent overwhelmed with infirmities and ill at ease. Though I had scarce known her, I regretted her deeply, and all the more as I began to find myself in the position to lend her greater aid.

Before I went to the Bastille M. de Valincourt had made me acquainted with M. and Madame Dacier. He had even admitted me to an entertainment which he had given to reconcile the *Ancients* with the *Moderns*. La Motte, the leader of these latter, briskly attacked by Madame Dacier, had responded politely, but with vigour. Their combat, after diverting the public for a long time, ceased on the interposition of M. de Valincourt, their common friend. After having negotiated the peace between them, he made a solemn ratification of it at this assembly, to which the chiefs of the two parties were convoked. I represented neutrality. We drank to the health of Homer and all passed off well.

M. and Madame Dacier had greatly sympathized with me in my captivity and gave me all the evidence of it that was possible. They took no less interest in my deliverance, and M. Dacier, afflicted as he was at the dangerous illness of his wife, wrote me a letter from her and himself, filled with the greatest esteem and most tender interest

in all that concerned me. He lost this celebrated woman so exactly made for him. His grief was of that nature which we feel when our loss is irreparable. I understood its extent and testified to him by a letter how deeply I was moved. The answer he made me shewed the excess of his affliction and the goodwill he felt for the sympathy I had expressed. I wrote to him six weeks after on behalf of Madame la Duchesse. I saw in his reply the same degree of sensibility as in the first moments of his distress. I truly commiserated him and then thought of it no more.



About a year later, the Duchesse de la Ferté, whom my imprisonment had won back for me, said to me in returning from Versailles :

“ I found with the Marshal de Villeroi that poor Dacier; it makes one sad to look at him. He told us that he was as much afflicted as at first and ready to die with despair. ‘ Well ’, said I, ‘ there is but one way to console you; you must remarry. ’ — ‘ Good God ’, cried he, ‘ what woman could replace the one I have lost? ’ — ‘ Mademoiselle de Launay ’, I answered. He remained dumbfounded, and after some moments of reflection he replied : ‘ She is the only woman in the world with whom I could live and who would not offend the memory of Madame Dacier. ’ The Marshal and I, seeing him moved, pressed the suggestion and have disposed him to entertain it. I would fain have him marry you; he is a famous man who has wealth; you would replace a distinguished woman; the marriage would be as honourable as expedient. ”

I felt what she told me and testified much gratitude for the care that she was again willing to take for my settlement. She assured me that she would follow this affair up and bring it to a good issue. Nevertheless distractions supervened; the Duchess made a journey into the country, and the idea escaped her. I spoke of it to M. de Valincourt, who found it advantageous and took more sustained measures to bring it about. He was a friend of M. Dacier; he brought him without dif-

ficulty to confide to him what the Duchesse de la Ferté had said to him. He admitted that this matter, though but lightly touched upon, had made a strong impression upon him, and that since that moment he had thought but of means to make his views acceptable to me. M. de Valincourt undertook to speak to me of the matter and to let him know my disposition.

The invincible love of liberty and repose had made me for a long time desire all that could procure me both the one and the other. M. de Valincourt was charged with a favourable response, dependent notwithstanding on the consent of M. and Madame la Duchesse du Maine.

M. Dacier, enraptured with this fortunate commencement, accepted with extreme joy the proposition which M. de Valincourt made to him to meet me at dinner the first time that I could go to Paris. This came to pass soon afterward. We had a long conversation wherein he assured me of his willingness to do for me everything which was dependent upon him, leaving me but the care of obtaining the consent of my masters.

Although I had none of the merits of Madame Dacier, the hope of again living with one whom he could esteem kindled in M. Dacier a passion for me more ardent than seemed to comport with his age and the condition he was in. The more

insupportable his grief and the unhappiness it caused him, the more necessary appeared the solace which was offered him. He desired ardently to conclude the engagement he had projected and spared no pains to succeed in doing so. He carried to M. de Valincourt a memorandum of his worldly goods which he gave to me in their entirety, and pointed out that the endowment he made me amounted to twenty-five thousand crowns, without counting his lodging in the Louvre and a portion of his pensions which he thought could easily be secured to me. The Duchesse de la Ferté, who on her return had taken the affair once more to heart, had spoken on this subject to Madame de Ventadour, to the Bishop of Fréjus, at that time tutor to the King, and to the Marshal de Villeroi, who had promised to obtain this favour to facilitate a business of which they approved.

The only thing that was lacking was the consent of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, and this was the greatest difficulty. At the first proposal that was made to her, she took umbrage; said that I was necessary to her and that she could not consent to a settlement which removed me from her. How advantageous soever to me, I would not accept of it against her will, and I could scarce do so with propriety nor without seeing

myself deprived of all reward for my long service. I asked for time to win her over little by little and to persuade her to this separation, which I regarded myself with dislike. Moreover I felt some distaste for this new engagement and I pleased myself by delaying an affair too good to wish it to fail, and yet not attractive enough to hurry to a conclusion.

Indignant as I was with the Chevalier de Menil, the sentiments I had entertained for him, hidden at the bottom of my heart, still stirred within me, and counterbalanced my graver interests. The new passion which had taken him during his exile in Anjou for one of his relatives, of whom I have spoken with the lack of esteem she deserved, but made me aware of his levity without exciting my jealousy. The journey and the sojourn of seven or eight months which he made in Switzerland soon after my leaving prison, despite the grief which I experienced from it and which all my dissimulation could not keep from his knowledge, convinced me of his insensibility to me. His return, followed by a second journey into Anjou, made as much to avoid me as to revisit my unworthy rival; his coldness and embarrassment when I saw him again in the interval between his journeys; the avowal of his change of feeling which I demanded of him, and which he accorded me; this entire abandon-

ment on his part of all pretension to me, gave me surely the right to dispose of myself without his consent, but I had not as yet acquired the power. I could not consequently refrain from sounding his sentiments when the first proposals were made to me of a new engagement. I wrote to him in Anjou, where he then was.

His response was comparable to those mysterious oracles whose various meanings lent themselves to whatever one desired. I read therein regret at losing me, a certain faint hope of renewing his former projects, the whole masked by a generous preference of my interests to any other thing; in fine more sentiment than he had shewn me for a great while; and perchance he really felt it. Nothing is too indifferent for us not to attempt to seize it again at the moment of its escape.

Madame la Duchesse du Maine had learnt, on returning from her prison and before I had left mine, of my engagement to the Chevalier de Menil and his pretended designs; she spoke to me of them on my return, but indifferently. The small disposition I saw she had to favour them piqued me; she forbade me to see him in her house under pretext of his proscription, and seemed not to lend herself to anything which I desired in the matter. It was easy for me to understand that she would fain retain me near her. But, from the moment that

she heard of the proposals of M. Dacier, she appeared to wish to favour my former projects; she told me that she had desired their success, that the juncture had not permitted her to forward them; that she was no longer compelled to be so circumspect; that, if I preferred these first schemes to those which now presented themselves, she would not be wanting in either the will or the means to assist them; that she would employ them so much the more willingly as this settlement would separate me less from her, which moreover seemed to her infinitely more agreeable for me than the one under discussion. She did not content herself with these generous proposals; she entered into details; told me that important offices might be vacated in the household of M. le Duc du Maine, which could be perfectly well filled by the Chevalier de Menil and would supply what might be lacking to his fortune and relieve him of the pretexts which he had used to elude his engagements with me.

Had I been guided by my own lights, how mediocre soever they may have been, I should easily have discovered the snare; but sentiment, ever blind, made me fall into it. I did not however yield at once, greatly shaken though I was; respect for the counsels of my friends still sustained me. M. de Valincourt and Madame de Réal represented to me incessantly the solid advantages of my marriage

with M. Dacier dwelt upon the property and independence I should at least acquire as a consequence of it, and urged me to settle it. 'Tis true that Madame de Lambert, a thorough Modern, perhaps out of resentment against one of the chiefs of the opposite party, pictured to me the life that I should lead with M. Dacier as very melancholy.

“What will you do with a man bristling with Greek?” she said to me, “and what will he think of you who know not a word of it?”

Nevertheless he employed various persons to solicit the consent of M. and Madame la Duchesse du Maine. Madame de Chiverny, one of his friends, prevailed upon Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans to speak of it to Madame la Duchesse du Maine. The Prince de Conti, to whom he had access, also spoke in his favour. The employment of so many means betrayed the affair and made it public; every one paid congratulatory compliments to me and even to Madame la Duchesse du Maine, who received them with anything but amiability.

However, I saw M. Dacier from time to time either at M. de Valincourt's or Madame de Réal's; he wrote to me frequently and attached himself more and more to me. I had among others one conversation with him in which he shewed so much eagerness as to make me recoil. I was sensible of the inconvenience of finding in a husband a degree

of affection to which I could not respond. I was then at Paris; I returned to Sceaux, my mind filled with this idea. Madame la Duchesse du Maine profited by it without knowing it; she had a conversation with me on the subject in which I wavered. She opened it with a little discourse full of affection, exaggerated the necessity that I was to her, the chagrin she should feel on losing me, and finally said to me :

“ You have not doubtless an invincible inclination for M. Dacier; the only consideration is that of fortune. What is the extent of the advantages that he will bestow upon you? ”

I enumerated them to her.

“ They are not great ”, she said to me. “ I can do and shall do much more for you if you will make this sacrifice for me; consider well your wishes. ”

“ Madame ”, I replied, “ I have given myself to you and I will not sell myself; Your Highness may dispose of me as you please. ”

“ Think no more of this affair ”, returned she; “ and as for me I shall give you all sorts of privileges. ”

In fine she multiplied those she had given me before, took me with her in her airings, made me a sharer in her amusements, and treated me almost like a lady of her household.

M. de Valincourt was very angry that I had allowed myself to be dissuaded so easily and without securing anything for myself. I believed that she would appreciate but the more what I had done. I should, however, have known that princes are hindered from remembering that sort of thing by the distraction of pleasures or the attention they must give to greater matters.

This zealous friend tried to convince me that what I had said to Madame la Duchesse du Maine was but a compliment and wished to follow up the affair; but M. Dacier, already suffering from a serious disorder at the time it had been broached, was not in a condition to respond to his views and begged in his turn for a delay. I went to his house to see him: he quitted the Academy, where he was at the moment, to come to me; he mounted the stairs rapidly and could then scarce speak; the trouble which he had in his throat suffocated him. He testified to me, nevertheless, his great desire and confident hope of living with me. Although he had seemed to me to be in a dangerous condition, I was infinitely surprised to hear of his death two days after this visit.

Madame la Duchesse du Maine, somewhat disconcerted at this news, expressed to me the regret she had at having hindered me from profit-

ing by the advantages he had wished to bestow upon me. The esteem and friendship he had testified for me made me regret him more than the feeble hope which had remained to me of renewing my relation with him. I had ample leisure to be sensible of the irreparable mistake I had made in missing so excellent an opportunity of procuring for myself rest and liberty.





THE Chevalier de Menil, on his return from his second voyage, was more estranged from me than ever. The few civilities that he paid me were so burdensome to him that I begged he would dispense with them; he made little resistance and we saw one another only when by chance we met at the house of Madame de Menou, his relative and friend, whose acquaintance I had made and who had inspired me with much esteem and liking.

His other relative from Anjou, so different from this one, came to live at Paris; he lodged



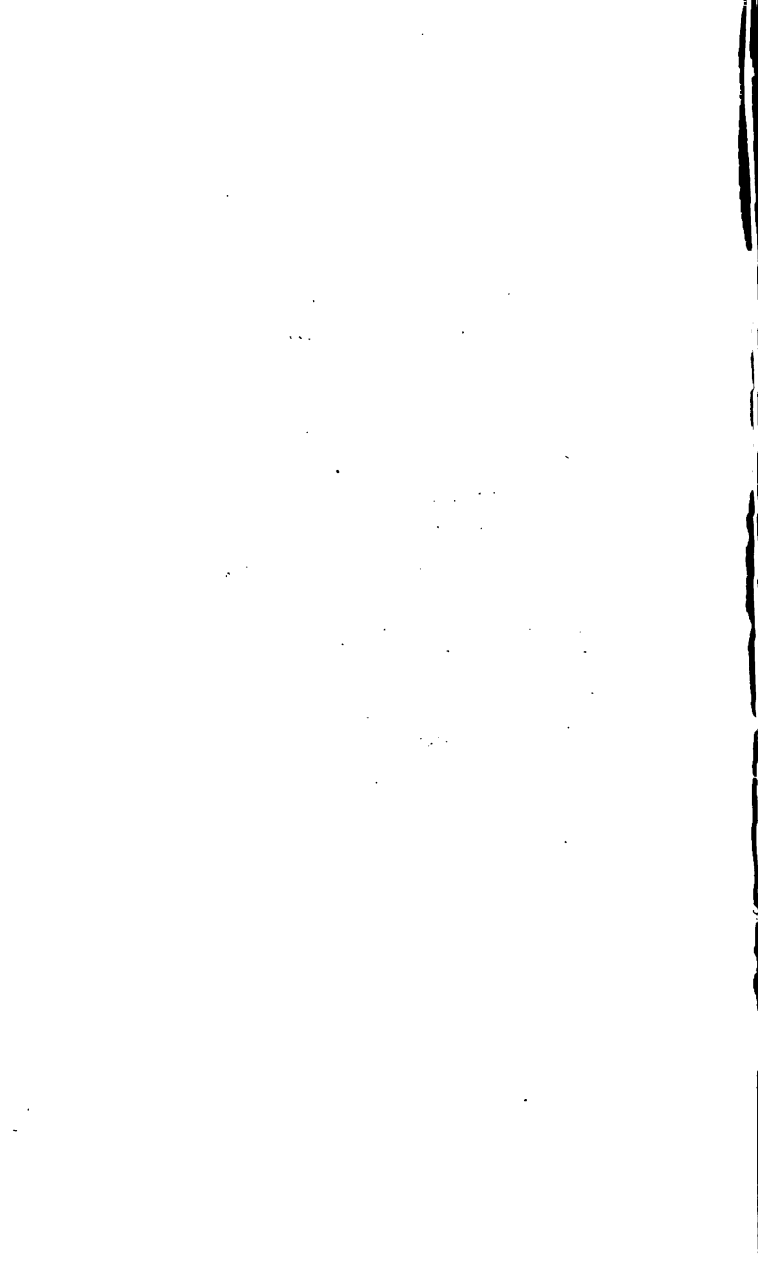


The Count de Menil, on his return from his journey, was more estranged from me than before. The few civilities that he paid me were so burdensome to him that I begged he would dispense with them; he made little resistance and we saw one another only when by chance we met at the house of Madame de Menou, his relative and friend, whose acquaintance I had made and who had inspired me with much esteem and liking.

Another relative from Anjou, so different from this one, came to live at Paris; he lodged



THE PRESENT FROM M. DE STAAL



her in his house and was enamoured of her to such a degree that the whole world knew of it. He desired that I should see her : perhaps he thought that she would be his justification, for I scarce fancy that he wished to vaunt himself of the sacrifice which he had made of me. Whatever it may have been, he persuaded her to shew me some attentions, to which I thought I must respond in order not to act toward her otherwise than toward another; perhaps, also, I was not sorry to behold the rock on which I had been wrecked. She wrote to me and invited me to dine at M. de Menil's with M. de Fontenelle and others of my friends when I should come to Paris. I went there, I saw her; I found her such as she was, large and well made, not at all handsome, still less pretty, with the wit and manners of the country; the others found her the same. 'Twas a most solid satisfaction to know wherein had lain the strength of the attachment I had valued so highly, and I gave myself no further concern but to efface the sad memory of it.

Among the distractions that presented themselves to me, the one that occupied the first place in my mind came from the quarter of M. de Silly. I have said that he hastened to see me after I left the Bastille. He was not indifferent to the kind of glory I had gained. He sought me

out when I went to Paris and was more friendly toward me than he had ever been before. He was then greatly taken up with a serious passion for a woman more notable for her rank than her beauty. Fascinated chiefly by his opinion of her purity, he was persuaded that she would have been incapable of weakness for any other than himself. This victory over virtue, which he had scarce before encountered, lent greater ardour to his sentiments than any other charms could have done to which he was more accustomed. Each day he embellished this creature of his imagination with new traits more suitable for her adornment. But the more flattering our illusions, the more mortifying their destruction. He perceived or fancied he perceived that this woman, whose sole object he believed himself to be, was casting her glances upon another. Unable to support the chagrin he felt at this, he confided it to me as well as the rest of his adventure. This confidence displeased me. I saw, however, with satisfaction that he was ignorant of the interest I might have taken in it. He besought my counsel. I told him I had listened willingly to the recital of his pains and the reasons of his uneasiness because of my interest in him; that my way of thinking permitted me to do nothing further for his service; that, moreover, considering the impropriety in

all respects of the case in question, I was surprised that he had cared to make me participate in it. He implored me by all the friendship I had ever testified for him at least to hear him. I consented, which was no small concession, for he had so many things to say that tended to nothing, and, when he had said them, repeated them so many times that I wondered at my patience in listening to him.

Not content with talking to me, he wrote me volumes. I made no doubt that his passion was a most violent one. However, he took the resolution of sacrificing it to his vanity, which he believed affronted. He imparted to me this design. I told him to weigh it well, and, when I saw him fixed in it, I became more complaisant in giving my advice, thinking that ruptures were within my sphere. He wished to begin this one by a letter the model for which he entreated me with instance to give him, as the agitation of his mind left him in no state to write anything coherent. The tranquility of mine was not less a hindrance in determining what ought to be said. Nevertheless, I had a mind to please him, and this with a desire, perhaps, to part him from a person whom I liked not that he should love, prevailed upon me to write a letter with which he was satisfied. He copied it and sent it to the lady,

who was indignant and demanded with importunity to see him. He would not. Fresh embarrassment in shaping his refusal and a new application to me to furnish him with this composition. This one led to another. I had embarked, I must go to the end. A woman of great distinction in the world was privy to this affair and had lent herself to it, so she averred, in order to save the reputation of her friend and protect her from her own imprudence.

M. de Silly, greatly under her influence, had chosen the occasion of her absence to break with her protégée. The latter wrote of her misfortune to their common friend, who addressed a furious letter to the faithless lover. He sent it to me, wishing that I should once more respond. All this passed while I was at Sceaux, where I received daily couriers from him bearing missives without end. Nothing made me feel so strongly the invincible power which a first liking had acquired over me as the complaisance with which I followed the course of this affair.

The lady who was in their confidence returned from the country. We were the greatest friends alive. She knew of my connection with M. de Silly and complained of him to me, assuring me that he had done nothing but trifle with the person in whom she was interested.

I told her that I thought I knew to the contrary.

" Ah! " cried she, " if you had read the letters he has written her, you would be convinced that he has never had the smallest sentiment for her. "

In truth, they had not come from a heart deeply stirred; but also it was not he who had written them.

Nevertheless the deserted mistress, finding it impossible to obtain the interview she asked of him, and having learnt that we had made a party to go and dine at a country house which her friend, and ours, possessed near Paris, presented herself there. I was excessively surprised at this encounter, and still more so when without pretext or decorum she carried off M. de Silly into the garden after we had risen from the table, and kept him there so long that at length, the hour having arrived when I must repair to Sceaux, and he having undertaken to carry me back, I was constrained to give him notice of it. For all that, he did not appear. I signified my perplexity to the mistress of the house. She resented more than I that I should witness so ridiculous a scene in her house, knowing well my opinion of it. Seeing that messages were useless, she went with me to seek them in the garden and break off the interview. We found them still prodigiously animated when we joined them; 'twas not by love, but by fiercer passions. The woman

was half dishevelled and not a little resembled a Fury. Her lover maintained a composure full of resentment.

He carried me home and apprised me that he had been convinced by nothing of what she had said in her defence; that she had refused to submit to what he exacted of her in order to guarantee him against fresh suspicions, and that he was more confirmed than ever in his previous resolutions. In effect, he resisted all attacks and never resumed his relations with her; but he remained so much occupied with her that he wrote me incessantly of all her proceedings and added long commentaries on them. Some of these offended him, and in this irritation he made, although he had never before done so, very satirical verses upon her, which he sent to me, signifying the design he had of publishing them. I opposed this so strongly that he yielded to my reasons. He continued for a long while to converse and write to me on this subject. The *naïve* pictures he drew of the divers emotions of his mind interested me. I listened and replied to him as long as he had anything to say.

He preserved the letters I wrote to him on this affair, and almost all those he had received from me during my imprisonment. He had taken measures to have them restored to me together with many other papers in case I should survive him.

They were faithfully remitted to me after the tragic event of his death.

The remainder of my life, though long, contains scarce anything of which the recital would interest me. I had no further relations with the Chevalier de Menil. Certain ideas which I entertained, of rewarding the faithful attachment of poor Maisonrouge and of uniting my lot with his, were frustrated by his death. A pining sickness into which he fell soon after our separation obliged him, the following year, to seek the air and waters of his native place, where he died. I regretted him infinitely more than I had known how to value him.

I found myself thus deprived of all aim. My lack of interest cast me into a sort of lethargy worse than the entire cessation of life. I was weary and held the world in abhorrence. I desired nothing more than to sequester myself from it. M. de Valincourt, always my good friend, but whose extreme piety kept him in almost continual retirement, not merely approved this plan of mine, but laboured to procure me the means. He solicited with this view a small pension for me which he obtained; but, as the negotiation was lengthy, obstacles, which supervened, put an end to my project. Madame la Duchesse du Maine fell dangerously ill and was a long while in recovering. She showed me so much confidence and friendship at this time, when on

my side I did all that could be done, that I knew not how to announce my design to her. I thought that time might bring a more favourable juncture.

I was still turning this idea over in my mind when the Chevalier de Grieu, who had had the fancy before my sojourn in the Bastille to declare himself my ally, and to whom I confided on coming out the serious engagements that I had undertaken, informed me of an idea he had that a man who had been attached by many ties to our household, before I had entered it, was then moved by sentiments for me stronger than mere esteem. He told me that he had heard him speak in terms which did not permit him to doubt of the fact.

Although we lived in the same spot, we had had no commerce with each other. His haughty temper rendered him unsociable; I was not forward and we scarce ever spoke. For all that, I was much touched. One saw in him an exact and delicate probity. His courage in risking displeasure by telling the truth, his exemption from flattery, virtues as rare in little courts as in great, these, joined to noble sentiments and to a good reputation in his calling of soldier, had gained for him my esteem. Although I might regard as visionary what had been told me of his prepossession for me, I gave him more attention. Curiosity to be enlightened, weariness of my idleness, a desire to attach myself

to something after being deprived of all ties; these various motives, all so well hidden in the inmost recesses of my heart that I did not suspect them, led me to shew him some civilities, to profit by the occasions to converse with him, and shortly resulted in my seeking the spots where he might encounter me.

'Twas summer, we were at Sceaux, and I went every evening to take the air alone in a flower garden beneath the windows of the château. He used to come and join me so regularly that no day passed but we conversed together for a tolerably long while. The first time we missed doing so I was sensible of a disquietude which I scarce recognized. I began to fear the horrors of a fresh passion. Disposed by nature and accustomed by long habit to affection, I had no longer the strength to dispense with that kind of support, but then I knew that such a stay, itself unsteady, falls on whosoever leans on it and rarely fails to crush him. The contradiction between my knowledge, founded on experience, and the inclination which carried me away, threw me into a disturbed condition of mind. I resolved to stifle in its infancy this sentiment which so alarmed me; I found it stronger than I had looked for; it acquired fresh force from the efforts I made to combat it. In attempting to avoid an object which was

How sustain her wrath and her reproaches when I had no obvious reasons to allege? As an escape from so many embarrassments it entered my mind to join the Carmelites without letting any one surmise my design. I thought that, shut up there, I could sustain an attack behind secure ramparts which none could carry.

The Comtesse de Brassac, who was attached to our household and with whom I was in correspondence, had an apartment there in which she passed a part of her time. I went thither to see her in her parlour. I begged her to make me known to some of her friends among the nuns, of whom she had often spoken to me as young women of parts. I conversed with three or four who seemed to me excellent company. I thought that their society would be a help in supporting the austerity of their life, and I confirmed myself in my resolution. I made Madame de Brassac privy to it; her great piety made her approve, although she foresaw that Madame la Duchesse du Maine would take it ill. A few days after, I got into a carriage belonging to our establishment which was sent to fetch her to pass the evening at our house. I made as if to receive her at the door of the convent; and, when I saw it open, I entered and told her that I would fain remain there, and that I besought her to tell Madame la Duchesse

du Maine that, having taken this resolution, I had not had the courage to announce it to her, nor to sustain the efforts which she would have made to combat it.

The prioress and several nuns who had accompanied Madame de Brassac to the door were present. My proceedings surprised them as much as they did her, for she had not expected me to carry out my design so soon. After having recovered from their first amazement, they asked me if I had sufficiently considered the step. I told them that I believed so and that it seemed to me that too much scrutiny into that sort of decision weakened the resolution; that I besought them to receive me at once; that I could not answer for finding myself so disposed at another time. This answer made them doubt whether my vocation was sure. The prioress, a discreet and enlightened woman, told me that it appeared to her more proper that I should consider it farther; that, if I were in truth called to that estate, reflections would but serve to lead me on; that, if they turned me back, 'twere better they did so too soon than too late. I persisted with energy, but the prioress remained firm; the other nuns and Madame de Brassac approved and all agreed that it must be deferred. I returned consequently with Madame de Brassac, who knew not whether she

had done well or ill. I remained persuaded that to defer the step was to ruin all. I felt myself too weak to expect always a like exertion of myself.

I thought, however, that this attempt, although it had miscarried, would intimidate him who had driven me to make it. I apprised him of the risk I had run, in order to prevail upon him not to expose me to it again; he was struck and held himself aloof a while. I suffered the more and was not thereby disengaged from him; he saw this and drew near again. I formed fresh schemes to part from him altogether.

We had at Sceaux, at that time, a Madame du Deffand. She conquered me with charms there was no resisting. No one had more wit and no one was more natural. The sparkling fire of her intelligence penetrated to the heart of everything, drew it forth, and brought into relief its simple features. She possessed in a supreme degree the talent of painting characters, and her portraits, more lively than their originals, made them better known than the most intimate acquaintance with them.

She gave me an entirely new idea of this kind of writing in shewing me many portraits she had drawn. Mine was among them; but a little kindness and too much politeness had, contrary to her habit, led her to swerve from the truth. I attempted

to do it myself to shew her her mistake and gave to her such an one as you see here.

PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

DRAWN BY HERSELF

“ Launay is of medium height, thin, sharp-featured and unpleasing. Her character and her wit are like her figure; there is nothing amiss, but there is no charm. Her ill fortune has done much toward securing her consideration. The general prejudice, that persons lacking in birth and wealth are wanting in education, makes every one feel grateful to them for what little intelligence they possess; she however received excellent instruction, and 'tis the source whence she has derived whatever of worth she has, such as her principles of virtue, her upright sentiments and her rules of conduct which the habit of obeying has made second nature to her. 'Twas ever her folly to desire to be rational, and, as women who feel their bodies laced imagine that they have a fine shape, so, when she found herself inconvenienced by her reason, she fancied that she had a good deal of it. Nevertheless, she has never been able to subdue the vivacity of her temper, nor even to give it some appearance of equability, which has often rendered her disagree-

able to her masters, a burden to society, and altogether insupportable to people who have been dependent upon her. Happily Fate did not place her in a situation to involve many in this misfortune. With all her faults she has not failed to acquire a sort of reputation, which she owes solely to two fortuitous occurrences, the one which proved she had wit, the other which shewed she had discretion and firmness. These events, being widely known, brought her into prominence despite the obscurity in which her condition had placed her, and secured for her a consideration above her estate. She has tried not to be vain of it, but the satisfaction she feels in believing herself exempt from all vanity is but another kind of pride.

“ She has filled her life with serious occupations, the rather to fortify her reason than to ornament her understanding, which she values but little. No opinion presents itself to her so clearly that she sets much store by it, and is not as ready to reject as to accept it; thus she seldom enters into a dispute if 'tis not from ill-humour. She has read much, yet only knows enough to listen to what one says on any subject and not to make impertinent remarks. She has sought diligently to know her duties and has performed them often to the cost of her inclinations. The scant indulgence she has ever shewn herself has justified her in shewing no lenity

to any one else, wherein she but follows her own inflexible nature, which her situation has bent without causing it to lose its spring.

“ Love of liberty is her ruling passion, an unfortunate passion for one who has passed the greater part of her life in servitude; therefore her condition has always been insupportable to her, despite the unlooked-for alleviations she has found in it.

“ She has ever been extremely sensible of friendship, though more affected by the merit and virtue of her friends than by their sentiments for her; lenient if they failed her, provided that they failed not themselves. ”

I passed many years in the state of painful indecision which I have described, without being for a moment at peace with myself. I lost during this time the persons who were dearest to me : the Marquis de Silly, by a death so frightful that I would fain not revive the memory of it; a year after, Madame de Réal, my sole consolation, died; her aunt, Madame de Grieu, who had brought us both up with so much tenderness, followed her soon; I lost also M. de Valincourt, the only true friend who remained to me. I found myself isolated on all sides. These ties which had held me to the world being broken, I took an aversion to it which, joined to other mortifications I received from my

Princess, inclined me more strongly than ever toward complete retirement; but not to the Carmelites, whose too austere life appeared to me, on examination, beyond my strength and mayhap my zeal. I thought of returning to Saint-Louis at Rouen; the affection we preserve for the spots wherein we have passed our youth gave me a strong preference for that convent. I spoke of it to Madame de Bussy, a woman of excellent parts, with whom I became intimately united after I lost Madame de Réal; she had my entire confidence and saw that I could by no other means break the bonds which made the misery of my life. She approved my making a trial of the course I wished to take.

I communicated to Madame la Duchesse du Maine my desire to see the place where I had passed the greater part of my life, and besought her with great urgency to allow me to make a journey thither and sojourn awhile. She took umbrage at this proposition. Nevertheless, by dint of perseverance, I obtained my leave of absence, but not without promising on oath to return. She suspected that this journey might cover a plan of retirement and made me explain myself on this point. I avowed to her that I had a taste for solitude, and that I had always desired to end my life where I had begun it. She exacted from me a fresh

oath to renounce this project; I would promise but to return from the journey I was about to make.

I departed with the delight one feels at having surmounted very great difficulties even in a trifling matter. Those which I had met with from my Princess were not the only ones. The man from whom I would fain separate myself had made use of every means, save those he should have used, to retain me. I had apprised the abbess, whom I knew not, of my coming, by a nun of my acquaintance to whom I had written several letters on my present views, and on those which I might have in the future. I was received in the convent with transports of joy such as only nuns are capable of. They had cherished a memory of me far

more lively than the one I had preserved of them. Their excessive assiduity was a burden to me. The abbess took a liking to me, and would have



me incessantly with her. I went there to be alone; I found myself more given up to others

than in the midst of the world. The same passions, the same emotions which agitate great courts, are to be found in these little monarchies; one sees the same means brought into play, with less address, and for objects whose pettiness adds distaste to the weariness of so much bustle. I found anything but the solitary and peaceful abode whither tended my desires. I thought that a place where I was neither known nor admired would better conform to my views, and I abandoned the design of settling myself there. I remained about six weeks; then returned to Sceaux in fulfilment of my word. I was not too well received. My attempt at freedom had given displeasure.

Madame la Duchesse du Maine, fearing lest I might break the bonds that attached me to her, considered how she might strengthen them. She opposed my ideas of retirement, sought to penetrate all my reasons, and gave me an opportunity to state the perplexities and the discomforts to which the equivocal position I occupied in her service exposed me unceasingly. The position she had accorded me since I had quitted the office and functions of waiting woman had no precise limits. I scarce ever knew whether I stood within or without them. However little I might overstep them, either without perceiving it, or by her

orders, the glances and murmurs of her ladies, scrupulous of the distance that should be maintained between themselves and me, made me retire discountenanced. I presented these discomforts as an excuse for the step I contemplated taking : although they were not the true motives, they were more like to strike her than any other. She told me that there was a way to remedy this by marrying me to a man of quality who would place me on a level with all the ladies of her court; that the offices which M. le Duc du Maine held placed in his power to make the fortune of many; that without difficulty some officer under the command of that Prince might be found, who, for his advancement, would undertake this marriage; that she would seek for one fit to fulfil her desires in this matter who would, moreover, be suitable to me. I fancied that the discovery would not be easy; that I should find time and means to escape it if the matter were not sufficiently advantageous to me; that, in case it should be arranged, 'twould be better than my present situation; that the necessity of dividing my duty would procure me a sort of freedom, and that I should find in this engagement, according to my way of thinking, as strong barriers against my own weakness as within the walls of a convent. Consequently, far

from opposing the good pleasure of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, I expressed to her my gratitude for the pains she was willing to take for my settlement.

Several had presented themselves since I had lost M. Dacier; but the drawbacks I had remarked in each case had hindered me from accepting them. One man among others who had known me a long while during the lifetime of his wife, with whom I had been very intimate, offered, soon after her death, from sheer esteem to share his fortune with me. It had been great in the matter of property; but his affairs were at that time so involved that I could not bring myself to enter into a labyrinth whence I could see no way out.

Once again I inspired a passion long after having renounced any claim thereto, and at an age when one no longer arouses it. A country gentleman, whom I met by chance, imagined, pursuant to his slight knowledge of the world, that a person established in a court under the protection of a Princess had but to wish to make the fortune of any one. He had been for a long while employed in matters of finance and aspired to an important place in that department. This man regarded me in the light of a powerful protectress, and as a person whom he might induce

to serve him by making her considerable offers. At the time he said nothing, but soon after addressed me a long letter, mightily well written, in the which he set forth his views, the place he desired, the reasons for aspiring to it, the means to obtain it, and his intention of requiting my services with a considerable sum or pension which I might present to whomsoever I pleased. I told him in my response that I had no power, but that, if I had, I would not sell it for any price whatsoever. In effect, in cases where I was more like to have thriven, I have always regarded such propositions with the scorn they deserved.

The frankness and honourable sentiments with which my letter was filled sensibly affected him to whom it was addressed. He replied and changed the offer he had made me to that of his person, if his fortune should become good enough to persuade me to accept him, or even, such as it was, if he might venture to offer it. I responded again with the same sincerity, making him see that he had nothing to hope from me with regard to his fortune, and that, having nothing to contribute to it, I should feel awkward in accepting a share of it. He made fresh entreaties, which he accompanied by an exact statement of the property he possessed, the value of his places, the advantages he could offer me, and the great

expectations he had, both from a considerable enterprise in which he was then concerned and from the interest of the powerful persons by whom he was protected. I perceived in what he laid before me enough propriety to merit my attention. I observed in him great probity, an intelligence unaffected, but lacking cultivation, noble and virtuous sentiments and so great an esteem for me that I could not dispense with thinking kindly of him; I went no further.

He came to Paris, passed several days there, saw me, gave me proof of the most respectful attachment and the greatest desire to unite his lot with mine. I gave him to understand that in my position, and at the age which I had reached, I could not be pardoned for changing my condition save for a fortune which would be extremely advantageous, and that, in fact, I was like those antiques whose price is augmented by their age.

He explained to me the enterprise in which he had invested the greater part of his wealth. He promised himself immense profits from it, and believed its success to be infallible. I judged otherwise, and refrained from contracting any engagement upon such an equivocal shewing. In effect, the affair miscarried and brought about his ruin; other disasters were added to it and his misfortune

was complete. I was so much the more affected by this as I believed that I had augmented it by the despair he manifested at no longer having anything to offer me. I regretted that I was in no position to repair his misfortunes, or to requite his generous sentiments either by myself or some other compensation. I had not even the satisfaction of being able to do anything for him on several occasions when he sought my aid.

Other marriages were offered to me, which did not suit me. One was with a man of sufficient wealth, but of an indifferent condition, who lived very retired in Paris, and wished for a woman of sense to keep him company. I doubted, not knowing him, if I could make shift with him. I had to decide without investigation, and I refused.

A lady of my acquaintance proposed yet another to me. This was with a gentleman of about fifty years of age, who had lately quitted the service, and lived in the country on a pretty estate, where he inhabited a well built and well furnished house. Him I saw at the house of her who had spoken to me. He had a tolerably good figure and a good air; he did not find me so decrepit as he had fancied. Content, moreover, with the little property I possessed (for the friends whom I had lost had left me tokens of their friendship), he told his friend that he was ready to conclude the

treaty, provided that I had no objection to passing my life at his château.

I consulted Madame de Bussy with regard to this affair; I had made her privy to all the others, which she did not approve of, and she alone knew what made me entertain them. I sent her word concerning this one (she was absent): that, in truth, it was the same as throwing myself out of a window, but that I had faced that possibility for a long time. She answered that this window seemed to be on the tenth story, and that at least she wished I would not throw myself from such a height; she represented to me that to shut myself up thus with one whom I did not know, incapable mayhap of understanding and even less of pleasing me, was the way to bring about the literal sense of the figure under which I had presented this match to her; that consequently she could not approve of it, unless he would consent that I should divide my life between Paris and the country. I followed this counsel and sent word to the man in question, that, attached as I was to Madame la Duchesse du Maine, I could not resolve to quit her for ever, nor undertake an engagement to which she would never consent upon such terms. He replied that, if I wished to preserve any other ties than those which bound me to him, I should not suit him. This response persuaded me

that neither would he suit me, and I broke with him.

Madame la Duchesse du Maine knew nothing of these abortive designs. Nevertheless she had charged Madame de Surl..., the wife of a Swiss officer of my acquaintance, and strongly attached to her, to seek for some one in the Helvetian Corps commanded by M. le Duc du Maine, who would take a wife without birth, wealth, beauty or youth. The thirteen Cantons were scarce adequate for this discovery. So the lady was a long time about it, and I thought no more of her mission, when one day, being returned to Sceaux, she said to me :

“ I think I have found by chance the very man we were seeking. Thinking but of an airing, I accompanied M. de Surl... to the house of an officer and fellow-countryman, who lives in the neighbourhood of the country-seat where I was. There I found a little house, new and neat, surrounded by a herd of cows and sheep. The master of the house, who was not young, pleased me by his commanding air. He is a man of quality, a widower, who lives in this retreat with his two daughters. They seemed sweet and sensible and entirely occupied with the cares of their household. He is not of high rank, although he has seen long service, and has done his duty well, because he

has stood aside, and merit which does not try to push itself is rarely recognized; but", added she, "I thought that a patronage which would advance him without his needing to trouble himself would be vastly agreeable to him; and, if Madame la Duchesse du Maine thinks well of what I shall say to her, I doubt not from all that I have learned from the enquiries I have made, but the proposal will be well received by her, and that it will be a most expedient affair for you. He is a man well born, who has lived little in the world, and has caught none of its vices. He possesses a little estate, cultivated by his care, two leagues from Paris. Add to this what the patronage of M. le Duc du Maine will be worth to him, and you will be mighty easy, both of you.

While she discoursed thus to me, a picture presented itself to my mind of rural life, which, when contrasted with mine, exalted each object and made me admire its sweet and simple grace. At that period I was drinking milk, and nothing seemed more desirable than to have cows near at hand. The pride of men takes care to conceal the sorry circumstances which have assisted in determining them in the most important junctures; and it is only by scrupulous and painful research that they can be found. Behold me then all aflame for the new kind of life I expected to lead!

I agreed that she should speak to Madame la Duchesse du Maine concerning the views that had been communicated to me. She approved of them, and it was decided that, without naming me, the settlement in question should be proposed to M. de Staal. Madame de Surl.... had a friend who knew him more intimately than she did; he was charged with this negotiation. The proposal was well received. M. de Staal, however, asked for a few days before giving a positive answer. He lived with his daughters, with which arrangement he was perfectly content; and he would fain have them accept a stepmother; the very name is always odious. He found it difficult. Mistresses in their little cot, and accustomed to housekeeping, they feared that I might take the management and possess myself of the authority, a cause of envy in the fields as in courts. My lack of capacity and taste for that sort of thing would have set them at rest; but they were not aware of it. Nevertheless they yielded to the inclinations of their father, who desied a certain and easy fortune in what was offered him. He prudently wished to give a fixed object to these general promises. He was but lieutenant of a company of guards, of which the captain, suffering from apoplexy, had been long since incapacitated from serving. He asked to be appointed to his place when his death, which could not be long deferred,

should vacate it, and, as preliminary, the title of commandant of that company, a rank of which he had exercised the functions since the incumbent had become incapable of doing so; promising to conclude the marriage proposed to him as soon as he should have received this first favour as earnest of the rest, which he would willingly wait for.

This was the abstract of his response. Madame la Duchesse du Maine approved it, and thought of nothing but how to make M. le Duc du Maine approve also. She laid before him all the reasons for desiring my settlement, presenting them in the favourable light which she knew how to cast over all that her heart was set on; but he, with his usual address in evading whatever he had not the courage to resist, applauded her scheme in general and proposed other men, whose consent was doubtful and whose suitability less sure. Madame la Duchesse du Maine was not imposed upon; accustomed to his shifts, she followed him up until she attained her end.

This took a long while during which it was judged fit to let me see M. de Staal and to shew me to him. The interview was at the house of Madame de Surl.... He was more content with me than he had grounds for hoping. I formed no opinion of him on this first view; but some time after I went with M. and Madame de Surl.... to his coun-

try house, where we dined. The place, the repast, the company, all recalled the simplicity of the golden age. I found a little house, gay and neat by reason of the whiteness of its walls; it became it to have no hangings. I have never since set great store by that sort of adornment. Poultry from the farmyard, meats from the herd, fruit from the orchard, covered the table. Our young hostesses, as in the days when Jupiter dispensed hospitality, prepared some of the dishes; we were regaled with cakes and cheeses fashioned and served by their own hands. I contemplated with pleasure this way of living, so conformable to Nature, who has become a stranger to us, and I felt that it would suit me. I was content with the master of the house, with his bearing, with a certain unstudied politeness, which springs from the heart and announces a sweet and kindly nature : in effect such was his. His soul, exempt from all passion, turned toward good by a natural bent; nor was it held back or diverted by anything. From this imperturbable calm resulted a perfect evenness of temper. His views were sound because they were not obscured by any disturbance of the mind; he had more precision than abundance of ideas; little conversation, but intelligent; in fine, he was one whose society could never disturb, and he was as incapable of inspiring an infatuation as of producing dislike. I

felt all this confusedly and unravelled it afterward, and I found a man whose nature had placed him on a higher plane than he could have attained through his understanding. We had a conversation after dinner wherein we treated of the affair in hand. M. de Staal manifested an extreme desire for it; notwithstanding he remained resolute not to conclude it until the title he demanded was conferred upon him. I approved this wise precaution, and we separated, content the one with the other. When I was mounted into the coach, he laid at my feet a little lamb, the fattest of his flock, which he besought me to carry with me. This pastoral gallantry seemed to me perfectly of a piece with all the rest.

I gave an account of the success of our journey to Madame la Duchesse du Maine. She desired ever the prompt execution of anything she had imagined; the delay in this case was disagreeable to her. M. le Duc du Maine, whom she urged to concede the condition exacted, made new difficulties. It was necessary to await some occurrence which should give occasion for the step; none such happened. During this time I discovered that the property we supposed to be M. de Staal's belonged to his children, and that he could bestow no benefit upon me but that of marrying a man of condition, a great advantage with regard to my situation, but

otherwise of tolerably little interest to me. We went to Anet; our distractions drove away all memory of the affair. I forbore to recal it; it seemed to me but so mediocre that I wished it might be entirely forgotten, for I was growing older with each day and the project of marrying me became more and more ridiculous.

I was in this disposition of mind when, after our return from Anet, toward the beginning of winter, M. le Duc du Maine said to Madame la Duchesse du Maine :

“ The Chevalier de Molondin has just had another attack of apoplexy; I seized the occasion to appoint M. de Staal Commandant of his company; that is done. ”

'Twas the only condition he had exacted to settle the affair. Madame la Duchesse du Maine sent for me to apprise me of his news, at which she was in raptures, and I was dumbfounded. What had pleased me from a distance changed aspect on a nearer approach. I perceived instantly all the inconveniences that had till then been hidden from my view. I was amazed at my blindness; I was sensible at the same time of the impossibility of retreating after all that had been done, and I fell into a kind of despair. The agitation of my mind or some other cause made me ill. I believed that the loss of my life was the only way of escape

open to me; this sad resource failed me; I recovered and was obliged to submit to the yoke I had allowed them to impose upon me. We went to Paris; I saw Madame de Bussy : she relished the affair and tried to encourage me; but I was desirous of at least deferring it. I made futile efforts to obtain a delay till after the campaign which M. de Staal was about to make. I hoped for some accident that might break off the engagement. The Princess said that M. le Duc du Maine had done his part, that it had begun to be talked of, and it must be settled.

As a last effort I represented to her that, having had no duty but the one that bound me to her, I was entirely disposed to hold to that single engagement, but that, if I undertook a new one, I should wish to fulfil that one also, which would be incompatible with the assiduity I had shewn toward her; and I begged her to consider this before anything was concluded, in order not to throw me afterward into the embarrassment of having to reconcile opposing duties. She replied that she had foreseen that I should have to share my time between her and my husband; that I should pass a part of it at his house, and the remainder with her. I besought her, how small soever the sacrifice might be, not to make it for the sake of an establishment for me which I could relinquish without regret. She was inflexible, and

heeded me so little that she could never recall afterward the representations I had made to her, nor the consent she had given to the sharing of my attentions.

The contract was signed, whereby the pension which M. le Duc du Maine had granted me since my imprisonment was secured to me. Madame la Duchesse du Maine gave me my apparel. The victim, bound and adorned, was led sadly to the altar by Madame de Chambonnas, gentlewoman-in-waiting to Madame la Duchesse du Maine, and conducted afterward to Her Serene Highness : she received me and saluted me with transports of joy. I went then to see M. le Duc du Maine, to whom I addressed these words of the psalm : "*Suscitans a terra inopem*", etc. "I might also add", I said to him, "*qui habitare facit sterilem in domo*, etc." He gave us many assurances of his protection. We knew not we were to lose him so soon.

These duties accomplished, we entered a coach, M. and Madame de Surl..., M. de Staal and I, to drive to Gennevilliers to dine at his house, where I had leave to spend a few days. I stopped on the way at Madame de Bussy's, who was then very ill : she had been languishing for a long time. She gave me a beautiful snuff box, and shewed me many marks of a tender regard. I

quitted her with sensible regret, and saw her again but when she was dying.

The sadness I carried away from there contributed not a little to make my new sojourn disagreeable. My step-daughters, who had evidently flattered themselves that the affair would never be concluded; angry at seeing me arrive, disappeared, in place of coming to receive me. They had not wished to be present at the ceremony, which had apprised me of their dispositions toward me. By dint of exhortations they engaged the elder to appear; she did so with a sufficiently bad grace: I made as though I perceived it not and sought by great civility to overcome her ill humour, which I dissipated. The younger daughter appeared toward the end of dinner with some lame excuse for not having come before; and everything assumed an appearance of propriety, but not of too much ease. M. de Staal was vexed at my disagreeable reception, I was amazed to find myself married, and our confusion spread through the household, even the company taking its share. This was composed, besides those I have named, of some of our particular friends who had followed us.

The day following this melancholy occasion, being uneasy concerning the health of Madame de Bussy, I wished to hear news of her, and, as

no one offered me with sufficient promptitude the means to obtain it, I went to my room and burst into tears. One of our friends came to seek me; it was the one who had broached the proposition of his marriage to M. de Staal. He was greatly afflicted to find me in such depression of spirits which was due



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to many confused causes. I explained my chagrin on various pretexts and resolved to hide it as well as I could. M. and Madame de Surl... and their friends took their departure, and I was still more embarrassed on finding myself alone and like a stranger in that house which I should have regarded as mine. M. de Staal did his utmost to render my sojourn agreeable, but one's first impression is not so easily effaced. I remained for some days longer and then went with him to Paris to await the return of Madame la Duchesse du Maine, who was gone to Sceaux to pass the carnival.

She returned soon after, and exhibited great

joy on seeing me again in my new character. I had the privileges of a lady of her household, her table, and a seat in her equipage. However, I was sensible, on one occasion that presented itself, of her repugnancy to displaying me near her in public. It was the time when the King reviewed the Swiss Guards. M. le Duc du Maine told her she should go and give me an opportunity of seeing this spectacle. She went and sent me with Madame de Surl... in a different coach from hers, where she had Madame de Bess..., who was better known at Court; whence I inferred that the sacrament of marriage does not, like baptism, wipe out our original sins.

To this discovery was joined another, which made me aware of a still greater misapprehension. M. de Staal was at home, where he had passed Lent; toward the end of it he sent me word that he should set out on the campaign immediately after Easter and begged me to come and spend Holy Week in his house at Gennevilliers. I made the proposal to Madame la Duchesse du Maine. She heard it with astonishment mingled with indignation, and, not content with an absolute refusal, showered bitter reproaches upon me, accused me of the blackest ingratitude and of the most iniquitous proceedings, as if I had failed in every duty toward her because, forsooth, I was

desirous of fulfilling one to the husband she had given me. I sought in vain to remind her of the explanation I had had with her previously on the subject; everything was forgotten and totally denied. I was then aware that I had but tightened the chains I had hoped to loose. I was the more indignant at a contradiction that promised so many others, as I had ardently desired that moment of liberty in order to share it with Madame de Bussy, who was then in the last extremities. I went to Sceaux to pass the week I had destined otherwise. I learned a few days later of the death of my friend; this filled the measure of my grief. The marks of regard which she gave me in her will served but to justify my regrets. She left me a pretty house in the country, completely furnished, which had been her great delight, and a diamond which she had worn upon her finger. These proofs of her tenderness will ever be precious to me, and the fond memory of so perfect a friend as present to my mind as it is profoundly graven on my heart.

I have never known any woman so perfectly rational and whose judgment yet had so little asperity in it. She possessed a soul of the most delicate sensibility and the best ordered mind in the world. Everything was sentiment in her, even in her thoughts, but sentiment most perfectly in ac-

cord with the purest views. This complete harmony rendered her lively without being uneven in temper, passionate without vehemence, ever gay, gentle and sensible. Exact truth, nice equity, inviolable fidelity, a fond and kindly humanity, resided in her heart; these were born there and remained there without effort. But what bound her friends to her most strongly was that they found in her that tender and perfect friendship so often suspected of being but a vain illusion. The confidence she knew how to inspire was of that nature one feels for oneself; and it would have been easy to tell her secrets which one would scarce own to oneself. The tender interest she took, the keen attention she gave to all one said, touched the bottom of the heart and discovered the most hidden recesses therein. The sagacity of her advice, her manner of making it acceptable, added profit to the delight of confiding in her.

The irreparable loss of such a friend, joined to the vexations from other quarters, threw me into a melancholy which completed my misfortunes. I made a journey to Anet, where I endured but annoyances. The sole satisfaction I obtained from it was in seeing, as I returned, the agreeable hermitage that had been given to me, and which was a little off the route we took; but I could only stop for half an hour. This brief view gave me a

great desire to live in that peaceful retreat. New misfortunes thwarted my design. M. le Duc du Maine, who till then had enjoyed perfect health, was attacked by a malady which at first seemed nothing and was soon incurable. Madame la Duchesse du Maine, distracted by the most lively inquietudes, retained me with her altogether. The cares and the assiduity which the state of her husband, the Prince, demanded, kept her for a whole year at Sceaux in a cruel anxiety, during which time, without recoiling from the horrors of a frightful distemper, she performed all the services which could have been expected of her. She was going to lose a Prince, the main stay of her house, who, despite his fall, had, by his own merit and the respect which all were accustomed to pay him, retained great consideration, both in the world and at Court; a Prince submissive by her invincible ascendancy to all her wishes, from whom she derived great advantages without losing that of her entire liberty.

After indescribable sufferings, the cancer in his face deprived him, one by one, of all the functions of life, and finally of life itself.

His death was as Christian as it was painful. I saw therein the destruction of all the hopes of fortune that had seduced me. These, however,

had a smaller share in my regret than himself, who was so worthy of esteem.

M. le Duc du Maine was a man of an enlightened understanding, ingenious and cultivated, possessed of all the usual accomplishments, especially knowledge of the world to an eminent degree, and of a noble and serious disposition. Religion perhaps rather than nature had endowed him with all the virtues and kept him faithful to his practice of them. He loved order, respected justice and never disregarded decorum. His tastes tended to solitude, study and work. Gifted with all that makes one amiable in society, he lent himself to it but with great repugnancy. When there, however, he was gay, easy, obliging and ever equable. His conversation, unaffected and sprightly, was replete with charm, and of a light and graceful turn; his anecdotes were amusing, his manners nobly familiar and polite, his air ingenuous. The secrets of his heart were not discoverable; mistrust guarded the entrance, and few sentiments made the effort to escape.

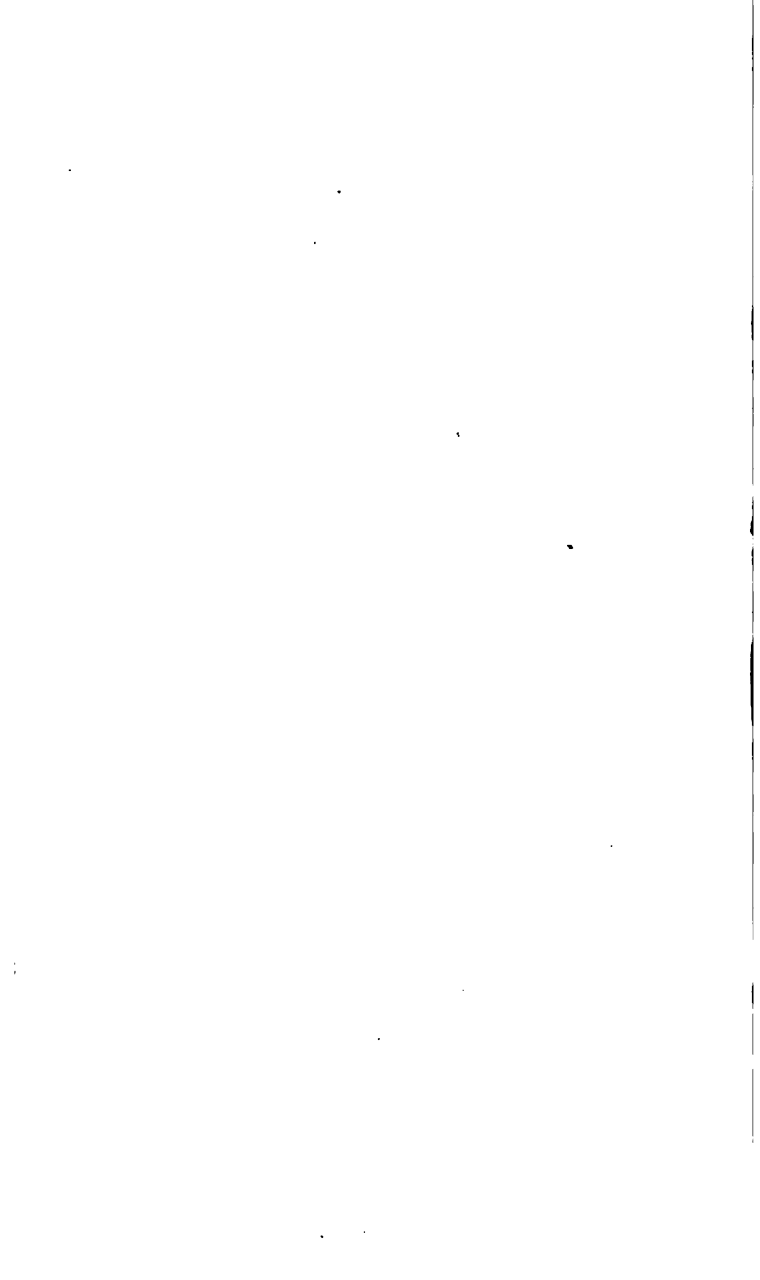
With reference to the letters which passed between her and the Chevalier de Menil, and which she promised to give, Mademoiselle de Launay writes at the end of her memoirs :

“ None of the letters of the Chevalier de Menil are

given, because they were returned him when I demanded mine. He engaged me in a promise, in rendering me mine, to keep them for a happier season of which he would still fain have flattered me. These sad records of an unhappy love became thus more dear to me, inasmuch as I had lost all else and I could not persuade myself to destroy them."

Mademoiselle de Launay gives therefore her own letters only, and, in the absence of those of Menil to which they were answers, we have decided that it would be unwise to reproduce them.







ANALYSIS

OF THE SECOND VOLUME

SECTION FIRST, pages 1-92.

Arrest of Mademoiselle de Launay, the Duke and Duchess du Maine. — Other arrests. — Taken to the Bastille with her maid Rondel. — First night in prison. — Visit of the governor. — De Boisdavis examined. — First visit of Maisonrouge. — Help from M. de Valincourt. — Examination. — Devotional exercises. — Comte de Laval arrested. — Confession of M. de Pompadour. — Liberation of Mademoiselle de Montauban and two others. — Mademoiselle de Launay secures paper and ink. — The attentions of Maisonrouge secure her consideration from all. — The Chevalier de Menil's dream. — Correspondence with him. — First sight of him. — Visit from Menil. — Correspondence interrupted. — Maisonrouge declares himself. — Another visit from Menil. — Correspondence resumed. — Menil declares himself. — Fresh meetings. — Devotion of Rondel. — Menil is jealous. — He is locked in with Mademoiselle de Launay and released by Maisonrouge. — He returns. — Is placed in a dungeon. — Maisonrouge becomes an intermediary between the lovers. — Menil's offense condoned. — Useless letter to M. le Blanc. — Dinners with the governor. — Singular interview with Davisard. — Message from M. de Bignon. — The amusements of the Comte de Laval. — Menil's good faith suspected. — Davisard's

sudden cure. — Mademoiselle de Launay's sister dies. — Peaceful and happy life.

SECTION SECOND, pages 93-137.

The Duchess du Maine at the citadel of Dijon. — Transferred to Châlon. — Her health affected. — Her anxieties as to Malesieu. — She is taken to Savigny, then to Chanlay. — Visited by her mother. — Petition to Parliament drawn up by the Duchess. — La Billarderie persuades her to confess. — Authorized to return to Sceaux. — Mademoiselle de Launay examined by M. Le Blanc. — All prisoners liberated but herself and Malesieu. — Menil takes a cold farewell. — More closely confined. — Attentions of Maisonrouge, who becomes an intermediary between the lovers. — The Duke du Maine wishes to retire to Clagny. — Grief of the Duchess. — Her confession criticized by the public. — Bad faith of de Maulevrier. — Attempts at reconciliation with the Duke. — The Duchess sends her confession to Mademoiselle de Launay through de Malesieu. — Malesieu exiled to Etampes. — Mademoiselle de Launay suspected of complicity in the insurrection in Bretagne. — M. de Torpanne sent to persuade her. — Rondel's high principles. — Letter to M. Le Blanc. — Letter from the abbess of the Presentation. — The Duchess du Maine demands Mademoiselle de Launay. — Return of Menil. — His unsatisfactory letters. — The Duchess sends M. Bocher to direct Mademoiselle de Launay to make a confession. — The confession. — Liberation of Mademoiselle de Launay.

SECTION THIRD, pages 138-163.

Mademoiselle de Launay returns to Sceaux. — Sad letter from Maisonrouge. — Interview with Menil at the Presentation. — Visit to Maisonrouge, to whom Mademoiselle de Launay gives all she has written in prison. — Visit to Madame de Réal when she sees M. de Silly. — Menil does not come. — His excuses. — Madame de Vauvray replenishes Mademoiselle de Launay's wardrobe. — The Duke du Maine rejoins

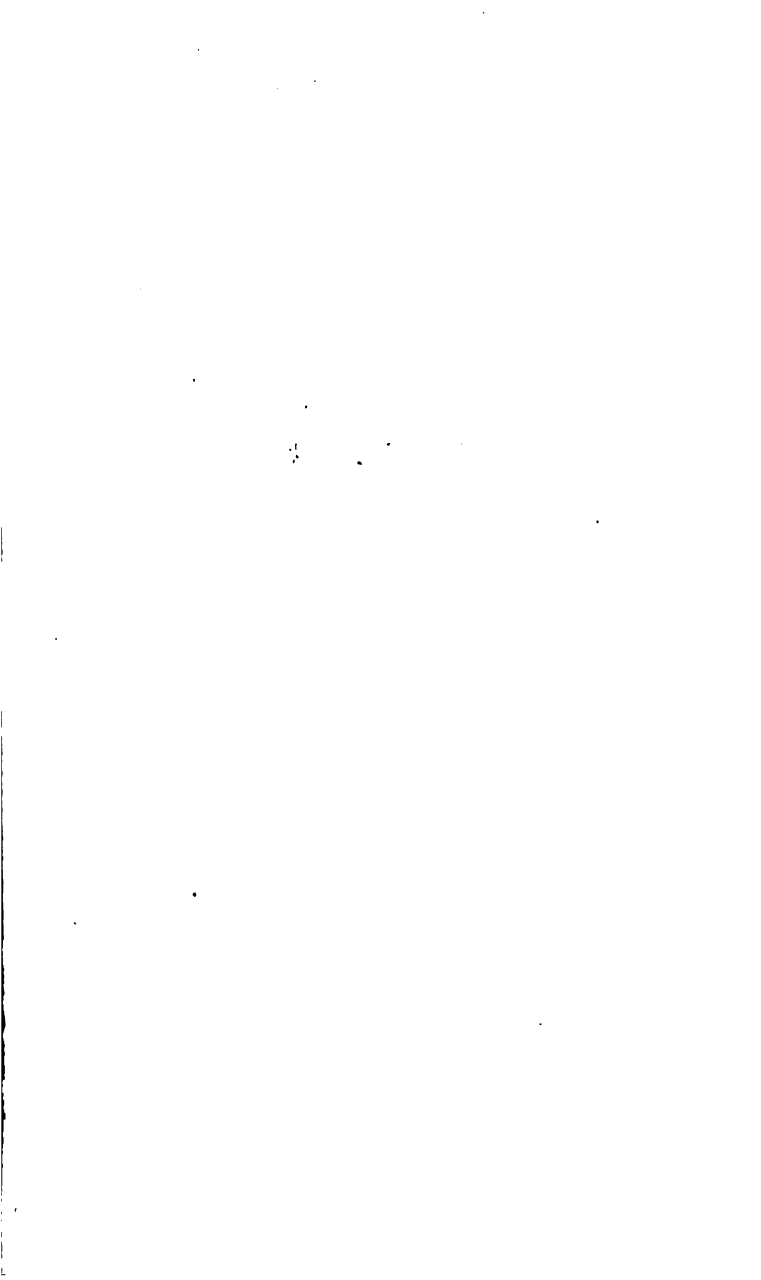
the Duchess. — Coldness of the Cardinal de Polignac for the Duchess. — She regains her entire liberty. — Mademoiselle de Launay loses her mother. — M. and Madame Dacier. — Death of Madame Dacier. — The Duchess de La Ferté wishes a marriage between M. Dacier and Mademoiselle de Launay. — M. de Valincourt takes up the matter. — M. Dacier wishes the marriage. — The Duchess du Maine opposes it. — Mademoiselle de Launay writes Menil, who returns an evasive answer. — The marriage generally approved, — Death of Dacier.

SECTION FOURTH, pages 164-207.

Final rupture with Menil. — M. de Silly confides in Mademoiselle de Launay. — The scene in the garden. — Death of Maisonrouge. — Mademoiselle de Launay discouraged. — A new schema for marriage comes to nothing. — Unsuccessful efforts of Mademoiselle de Launay to enter the Carmélites. — Portrait of Mademoiselle de Launay by herself. — Deaths of the Marquis de Silly, of Madame de Réal, Madame de Grieu and de Valincourt. — Plan to return to the convent of Saint-Louis opposed by the Duchess du Maine. — Mademoiselle de Launay's stay at Saint-Louis. — The Duchess undertakes her settlement. — A fresh proposal of marriage. — Other projects. — Negotiations respecting a marriage with M. de Staal. — Interview with M. de Staal and visit to his house in the country. — M. de Staal secures promotion. — Urgency of the Duchess for the match. — The marriage takes place. — Visit to Gennevilliers. — Frigid reception by the Mesdemoiselles de Staal. — Unkind and tyrannical acts of the Duchess du Maine. — Death of Madame de Bussy, who leaves Mademoiselle de Launay a house in the country. — Her portrait. — Death of the Duke du Maine. — His portrait.







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